

We Have Forgotten that the Way is Narrow -

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Matthew chapter seven verse 13.

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell — and great was its fall.¹

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

¹ Matthew 7:13-27.

Father, I come before you in the name of your Son. Father, you know this people. You know every person here. You know those who truly belong to you and those who are on the road to hell. From your Word we know you and your power to save, that you get great delight and mercy. It is not your desire. You do not gleefully watch the wicked perish. So, Father, I pray that you would get great glory for yourself and great glory for your Son by working through your Spirit to produce life out of stones, to resurrect dead hearts, to instill the fear of the Lord in those here today who do not fear you and that Christ would become precious. Father, your will be done. Lord, whether today is a fragrance of life or a fragrance of death, let your Word go forth and your will be done. In Jesus' name. Amen.

In verse 13 Jesus says, he gives us a command:

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.²

One of the most dangerous things you can ever do is teach half of a truth. And it is something in evangelical Christianity in America that is too often common place. Half a truth is taught. One side of the coin is shown. And that leaves a very, very dangerous blind side to those who are not discerning. We are taught today that there is only one small gate and that is true. We hear that in almost every denomination. We hear that in the Southern Baptist Convention. We hear that in modern day preaching. There is one small gate and his name is Jesus. But if you go through any other gate you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. You will not be saved. There is no hope for you. There is no gate except Christ and all those who miss Christ miss forgiveness, miss right standing with God and enter in to a devil's hell. That is true. We say that correctly and I applaud those who say this. But that is only half the truth. And because it is only half the truth this text has been used to damn many people to hell. Many people who believe that they are on the road to heaven and yet are not going to heaven, because only half of this verse is usually preached. We hear all kinds of sermons about that one gate named Jesus, but when was the last time you heard a sermon on not only the gate, but the way?

He says there is one gate, but after that gate there is a narrow way. If I were to look at most Baptist life today, most evangelical life and were to reinterpret this text based on what I see in the lives of professing Christians I would have to say this. The gate is narrow, but the way is broad that leads to life. So many people professing Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and yet when you look at their lifestyle it appears with all evidence that they are walking in the broad way. They live just like everybody else in the world, but they believe that they are saved because they believe that they have passed through that small gate named Jesus and they believe that they have passed through that small gate because one time in their life they prayed a prayer or repeated a prayer and asked Jesus to come into their heart.

² Matthew 7:13-14.

{?} decision they believe they are saved even though their lifestyle is a lifestyle of continually living just like the world. Now that is a fact. And I don't say it because I am angry. I say it because I love you and I say it because it is true. Do you not realize that throughout the history of Christianity there has been a cycle that has gone on and on? I am not speaking as a prophet. I am speaking as a historian. That Christianity appears and it is vibrant. People are born again and their lives are changed and Christ becomes absolutely everything to them. But as the generations continue on after, that Christian life turns into nothing more than a creed and people begin to believe they are saved just because they accept the creed. You have countless people throughout history who believe themselves Christians because they were baptized as infants. And the Baptists look at that and say, "How could they believe such a thing?" And yet the Baptists do the very same thing.

How many people in this county today live terrible, godless lives, but they know they are saved because one time in their life they repeated a prayer with a preacher? And how many preachers today preach that you are ok as long as one time in your life you asked Jesus to come into your heart.

My dear friend, a person is saved through faith in Jesus Christ. But most people today are not trusting in Christ. They are trusting in a decision they made a long time ago. They are trusting in the fact that they passed through certain evangelical hoops and said yes at every question that was asked them. Do you know you are a sinner? Yes. Do you want to go to heaven? Yes. Do you want to ask Jesus to come into your heart? Yes. Did you ask him to come into your heart? Yes. Then you are saved. That is not scriptural at all. It is not found in Scripture at all. It is not found in Church history at all, but it is the way we do evangelism today and that is why the great majority of people in America and in the Church believe themselves saved when, in fact, they are not. And they prove they are not because although they claim to have walked through that one small gate, they live in the board way. They look like the world. They act like the world. They talk like the world and their lifestyle will be the very thing that condemns them on the day of judgment.

What is this Scripture teaching? Well instead of standing on my own interpretation, let me just sum up the interpretation of the early Baptists and the early Congregationalists and the early Presbyterians and the early Puritans. This is what they would tell you this text is teaching. That the only way of a man to be saved is to pass through that small gate that is Jesus, to trust in Jesus Christ by faith. There is no other means of salvation. There is no multiple choice. Not all roads lead to Rome. The only way to be saved is through repentance of sin and a turning to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

But what about the way? Well, our forefathers taught us this. The evidence that you have truly passed through the small gate is that you are now walking in the narrow way. The evidence that you have truly believed in Jesus Christ is that your life has been changed and now you are walking according to the commandments of Jesus Christ and conformed to the will of God.

But today is it not true? Who can stand up and say any different? That the great majority of people not only outside of the Church, but inside of the Church say, "Yes, I have passed through that small gate. Yes, I have believed in Jesus Christ." But when you look at their life they live just like the world. They have the same desires of the world. The only thing they do is they are religious and go to Church on Sunday. But when you look at their life Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday there is no Christ and when you look about their conversation and their desires and their dreams and their passion there is no Christ. It is all about I already don't worry about me, preacher. I already got that done. I repented a long time ago. I believed. I am saved. I prayed that prayer. And that is what their religion is. And when asked about the confidence of their salvation they say, "I prayed that prayer." They are trusting in a prayer. I made my decision. They are trusting in a decision. I believed in that moment. They are trusting in the sincerity of their decision instead of doing as our forefathers did. How do you know you are saved? I am looking unto Jesus Christ and have great assurance because I can see the changes he has wrought in my life and the way he disciplines me zealously and guards my life.

You see, we have lost two doctrines in the Baptist life, the doctrine of security and the doctrine of assurance. We have lost them because we have taken both of them and combined them. And when we have done it we have lost them.

The doctrine of security, it is a bad way to explain the doctrine, but that is the terminology used today, the doctrine of security or if a Christian, if a person is truly saved, the power that saved them is the same power that keeps them. That is true. If a person is truly born again they are kept by the power of God. That is true. So everyone who believes in Jesus is securely saved, but the doctrine of assurance is this. How do you know you have believed, especially when the demons believe and tremble? And most people today say they believe and don't even tremble. The demons are more pious than they are.

Yes, everyone who believes in Christ is saved by faith alone, but how do you know you believe, especially if we were to dismiss right now and to go to every church person in this county we would find most of them saying they are going to heaven and they believe. How do we know that we truly believe unto salvation?

Well, he gives us the answer, the narrow way. The evidence that a person has truly passed through that small gate is that their lifestyle is a lifestyle of living in the narrow way. It goes something like this, as I explained last night. A man claims to have confessed Christ, to have trusted in Christ as his Lord and Savior and he rejoices in that it seems. He seems to be joyful. He even seems to bear fruit at times. But then after a while he steps off the path. He begins to return to the world, stays in the world, loves the world, goes back to the world. Has he lost his salvation? No. Is he saved? No.

By returning to the world, according to the Scripture, he is demonstrating that he never knew Christ and Christ never knew him, that his faith was false from the very first. Or

there is a more dangerous type who make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and they enter into the Church and they don't ever really go back to the world in the sense they don't ever really leave the Church, but they just sit there. They have got a little bit of religion. They go to church on Sundays. They are not passionate about the Word of God. They are not passionate about knowing Christ. They are not convicted of sin. They never weep over the sin in their life. They are never concerned about genuine fellowship with other believers, but they are in church every Sunday and they are pretty moral, but they do not grow in the things of God nor in the passion for God. That is the most dangerous type and our church are filled with people like that.

But the true Christian, if he has truly been embraced by Christ and truly embraced Christ by faith he walks through that small gate and he is sent on the narrow way and as he walks sometimes it is two steps forward and three steps, four steps forward and one step back. There is a struggle. There is a fight. There is victory over sin. There is failure, but in his life, the full course of it, you can begin to see progress in godliness. And if at times his heart grows cold and he steps off the path, the Father runs quickly, according to Hebrews 12 and as a father disciplines that believer and brings him back on the path.

There is a doctrine that was created in America tailor made for America. It is the doctrine of the carnal Christian, that a person can believe in Jesus Christ and live in carnality all the days of their life and be worldly and never grow and yet they are a Christian. That is a lie straight out of the pit of hell. It has nothing to do with history and nothing to do with the gospel in other countries. But it is convenient for America because it is a great way to explain how we can have all these churches filled with such carnal people and still call them Christian.

Now Jesus says here in verse 15:

"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."³

And old man once told me, "Son, your best friend is the one who tells you the most truth and tells you as directly and clearly as possible."

What advantage do I have here today by making you angry? What advantage do I have here today speaking hard words? Men who seek money and fame and well being and security do not speak hard words to other men. No, they tell them about their best life now and how they can have all the self esteem and prosperity and everything their carnal heart wants in this life. They flatter men because they do not love men. They care about themselves. They dress up like sheep, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. All they want to do is feed off people and the best way to feed off people the Bible tells us is to tickle their ears.

But then there are men sent from God who fear God, who love men and say only one thing. I have come and I have come with a word from God and I tell you because I love

³ Matthew 7:15.

you. Wake up. There are those of you sitting here today who will go to hell.

You are saying, “How do you know that? Can you look at my heart?”

This is a typical Baptist church in a typical country. There are people here going to hell. Some of you I have already spoken of. I have already described your Christianity. It is just an accessory to your life, something you do on Sunday if your back is not hurting. But Christ as a passion and as a joy and as the source and goal of your life cannot be seen, but you are Christian. Why? Because those preachers who should spend less time preaching and more time studying their Bibles have told you so. How do you know you are Christian? Are you walking in the narrow way? Is your life marked out by the commands of God? And when you break those commands, as we all do, for we are all fail and struggle with sin, when you break those commands does the Father discipline you or does he let you go?

Isn't it amazing? We would accuse me for the things we say God does. If there was a man in this church who had a child and from the time that child was born until the child left his home, the man never corrected his son, never disciplined his son. What would you say about that man? That he is a derelict father, that he doesn't love his son, because Scripture says if someone doesn't discipline their children they don't love their children. You would say this father, what? He has no character. He is going to ruin his child. And yet you will say that a person can be a child of God and live in sin 20 and 30 and 40 years and God never does anything to them. No, my dear friend, the evidence says, the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 12 that if you claim to be a Christian, but you are without the discipline of God, his intervening hand in your life to correct you and change you, that you are an illegitimate child, the Bible says.

Now your best friend is the one who tells you the most truth, the one who cries out and says, “Be afraid,” the one who warns even at the cost of making you angry.

Now he says this. Describing the false prophets, but also this can be greater, wider implications describing anyone who is not converted, this is what he says. With regard to the salvation of a man, whether he is genuine or not, you will know them by their fruits.

Now he begins this statement in verse 16. You will know them by their fruits. And look at verse 20. He ends the dialogue with the same statement. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Do you think he is trying to tell us something? He is saying, “You will know a Christian by their fruits.” Fruits here is plural meaning not just one aspect of their life, but when you look over the totality of their life you will be able to see that they are a Christian by what they do in the totality of their life. You will know them by their fruits.

Now immediately when I began to say this I always know that there is people in the audience go, “Judge not, lest you be judged.” Twist not Scripture lest you be like the devil, because that is not what that verse means, because that verse is found in this very chapter. The chapter that says, “Judge not lest ye be judged,” is the same chapter that

contains, "You will know them by the way they live, not by what they say, but by the way they live."

Are we talking about Perfectionism? No. Are we talking about some super spiritual Christians who never sin? No. We are talking about a style of life, that salvation is a supernatural work of God. It is a recreating of the heart, of the very core and essence of the human being. And if that person's heart or core has been transformed, their lifestyle will be transformed.

I always say, often hear people say, "Well, you don't know what is in my heart."

But the Bible says I don't have to know what is in your heart. It comes out of your mouth. That is why on judgment day it says they will be judged for their words, because all their words come forth out of their heart. You can't judge a book by its cover, pastor. Jesus didn't say that. He said just the opposite. Jesus said, "You can judge a book by its cover." You will know them by their fruits.

Well, I may not live like a Christian, but in my heart I love...

Do you know what the heart is? The heart in Scripture represents the very core essence of a human being. It is what a human being really is. When a man dies he is not there anymore. If you are ever there when someone dies you just notice the body seems to just turn to clay, an inanimate thing. The moment that man breathes his last the heart is a representation of the centrality of everything you are. So this is what you are telling me when you say, "I may not look like a Christian, but in my heart I love Jesus." What you are saying is Jesus Christ has changed the entire core of my being and the entire core of my being is dedicated and in love with Jesus Christ, but it is not going to affect any other part of my life." Does that sound right to you?

Well, Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits." And then he goes on, almost an argument of absurdity and he goes, "Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?" It is as though when Christ taught, the great rabbi as he was, he sat down. And he was sitting there. A lot of times Christ, I mean, Christ is amazing, the personification of the book of Proverbs. You did not want to get into an argument with this man. And he sits there and he looks at them. You will know them by their fruits.

Now let me ask you a question. Grapes aren't found on thorn trees, are they? And I can just hear the people, you know? Jesus, you are a carpenter and all that. You don't know a whole lot about agriculture, but you are right on the money right there. You are not going to find grape on thorn trees, thorn bushes. Got thorns on it{?} is not going to bear grapes. Well, you are not going to find thorns on a fig tree, right? There you go, Jesus. You are on the mark. What you are saying is true. Jesus, if anybody comes to you saying they have got a fig tree and it has got thorns on it, don't listen to him. They are either lying or they are insane.

Jesus said, "Then, in the same way anyone who comes to me saying they are a Christian

and they don't look like one, they are either lying or insane." You see how Jesus would catch men? Very dangerous debater this man.

Let me give you an example. I would... this is an illustration I have used a million times. Let's say I arrive here late. The pastor is all upset. Everyone is angry with me and I walk in the door. I am late. I am dressed like this. My hair is as combed as it gets and the pastor goes, "Brother Washer, what is the problem? You are a half an hour late. Don't you appreciate the opportunity to preach in this church? I mean the people have been waiting here and you just show up late."

And I say, "Oh, brother, I am sorry. But let me explain. I was coming down the highway here and had a flat tire and had to take the lug nut off the tire and when I took it off, well, it rolled out into the middle of the highway and I just wasn't thinking so I walked out there into the highway and I picked up the lug nut and when I stood up there was a log truck weighing 30 tons going 120 miles an hour and it was like five feet in front of me and it ran me over. And so that is why I am late."

He is going to say, "You are a liar or you are insane."

And I go, "No, really. Why can't you accept my word?"

He goes, "You are out of your mind or you are an immoral man."

And I say, "But why? Explain this to me."

He goes, "It is impossible to have an encounter with a logging truck and not be changed."

Then why is it possible for you have an encounter with God and remain the same? Behold the power of your God, not even the strength of a truck. Do you see? We can adopt a form of Credalism. We can read about it in history and if we don't realize physician heal thyself, we have done the same thing. Countless individuals being told that they are saved because one time in their life they repeated some words after an evangelist and then live like hell but they are saved. And they hold on to it all the way to the grave and passing through the grave straight into hell. It has infected and influenced everything in our Christianity today. Sunday school classes. Little children walk in and they are tore apart by their teachers.

I wouldn't send my child to even two percent, five percent of all the Sunday school classes in this country. Send a little child to a Sunday school class, paints a picture of Jesus. Here is a story about Jesus. And then the teacher says, "How many of you love Jesus?"

How many five year olds have you ever heard stand up and go, "No, I hate him." They all go, "Oh, I love Jesus." They don't even know who he is. How many of you want to go to heaven? Oh, I want to go to heaven. Well, then just pray this prayer. Ok, how? Dear Jesus, come into my heart. Thank you for saving me. Amen. Now you are saved. Take

them to a preacher who has no spiritual discernment at all and then they baptize them in a fire truck and boast about how many people got saved and the maybe if you can introduce that child into Southern Baptist life and the six flags over Jesus we create in our church with all the programs and everything else and get him going and get him in the youth group because youth group is real exciting because it has got a young guy who has got no more sense than the people he is leading, but he has got mousse in his hair and a great personality and they do all kinds of wonderful things so he stays in Southern Baptist life, then when he gets out from his home he lives like a demon and you go to him and say, "You are saved. You need to act like it," instead of saying, "You act like you are not saved and it is because you are not."

Examine yourself. Test yourself to see if you are in the faith. And what is even worse is then when that person after they have sowed all their wild oats at about 30 years of age they come back to the church and they rededicate their life which means they finally figured out church was good for them when they were kids so they want their kids in church and, after all, there is a lot of great programs and there is even a bunch of guys that hunt in church and play golf. So, I mean, this is a great deal because everyone is moral and nice to start off with. And they remain unconverted and go to hell.

Or some of them get genuinely converted and still the preachers do not understand and say he rededicated his life. No, he didn't. He got saved.

I know I am being sharp and I know I am being sarcastic, but I have a biblical foundation for doing so. Have you ever read the prophets? I am not here to tell you something. It seems like my preaching class at seminary was designed to teach me how to preach a text and take the blade off of it so it wouldn't hurt anybody. But that is not the way preachers preach. You see, look what we have done. Don't you know this yourself? Can't you stand and testify that it is this way? And yet no one seems to want to say it. And the world laughs its head off at all our converts and then all these evangelists running around. They manipulate people. They tell stories. They do 350 verses of *Just as I am* and it is like being in some tortured cult. You finally give in and come forward. Why? They are manipulating you. And then you come forward and they pronounce you saved and they go to the next church and boast that 300 people got saved, but none of them come to church on Sunday. It is just a circus is what it is.

But he says you will know them by their fruits. Now look at this.

"So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit."⁴

This is a probably the greatest teaching in the history of literature, whatever world you choose, Hebrew or Greek world, doesn't matter, on what we call ontology, the doctrine of being, the idea, the thought of nature. Here is something that you need to understand that people can't seem to grasp. The will is always in bondage or dependent upon nature. If something is evil by nature, it acts evil. If something is a pig by nature, it does what a pig does. If something is an apple tree by nature, it produces apples. You don't see apple

⁴ Matthew 7:17.

trees in the spring straining and groaning and twisting in order to try to produce some apples. You don't see cherries on apple trees. Nature and fruit, nation and action, nature and will are always connected. And that is why you have got to learn the doctrine of the radical depravity of man. You see, men are radically depraved. Men are born hating God. Men cannot come to God.

And people say, "Well, if men cannot come to God, then they are victims. They have an excuse. How can God judge them if they cannot come?"

This is what you need to understand. Men cannot come to God because men will not come to God and they will not come to God because they hate him. It is just like this. Listen. It says of Joseph's brothers they could not speak a kind word to him. Did they have tongues? Yes. Did they have brains? Yes. Could they talk? Yes. Then how can it say they could not speak a kind word to him? They could not speak a kind word to him because they hated him. It is just like if somebody says in the church, "Listen, sister so and so, you need to go over there and forgive that person." I can't. What do you mean you can't? You can walk. You have got legs. You have got a mouth. You can speak. What they are saying, "I am in bondage to my heart. My heart has enmity and animosity and hatred towards that person and that hatred controls me." That is why the Bible teaches no man can come to God because God is good. Men are evil. Evil men look at a good God and hate him and run as far away from him as they can get. And then it says all the truth that is out there about God—and there is a lot more than what people think even to the secular mind—all the truth that is out there about God men work with all their might to hold it down and restrain it because they don't want to hear it.

One of the leading evolutionists before he died he said, "I have absolutely no evidence for my belief in evolution. I must believe in evolution by faith. But I will do so because the only alternative is to believe that God is a creator and I will not do that."

You see, here is what you need to see. That is why when the gospel is preached unless the Spirit of God comes down and regenerates the heart with power, nothing is going to happen. But you get a slick evangelist in here and he could get 500 people saved in a weekend. But none of them will be changed, but all of them will be inoculated from the truth. They will spend the rest of their life telling every godly pastor, "You don't need to talk to me. I have done did that."

And so he says:

"So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit."⁵

It is the same way even here. I make long bows out of wood, primitive long bows. And so I go to a tree. I don't have to dig into the tree. I look at the bark. Is the bark twisted? Then the grain inside that tree is twisted. Is there a rot in the bark? There is rot in the wood and it will not sustain a bow. It is the same way in everything.

⁵ Ibid.

Now listen to this. Verse 18.

"A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit."⁶

This is another case in which we teach half of the truth. Now listen to this. This is very important. We are always telling people that a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. We are good at that as evangelicals, as Baptists. We tell lost men, "Now, look, all your good works are like filthy rags because before you are saved you can't bear any good fruit to God." That is what we teach them, isn't it? And when they argue, "Well, why not?" We say, "Well, your nature is bad and because your nature is bad, your works are unacceptable to God."

In the same way that if you brought a leper in here, a man with leprosy, and you tried to ... he is just covered in puss and blood and body fluid and you want to cover him up and make him look nice and you buy the finest silk possible and you dress him in it. He will look nice for a moment, but in a moment the body fluid, the blood and the puss will drain through to the silk and it will ruin the clothing and the clothing will become just as corrupt as the man. And that is the way it is with good works. A lost man has no good works because it comes forth out of a wicked, God hating nature. And that is what we tell people. You are not saved. You can't produce good works.

Why don't we just say the other part? Look what the other part says. Not only a bad tree cannot produce good fruit, but a good tree cannot produce bad fruit. We teach just the opposite in Baptist churches all over America, that someone can be born again, regenerated, their nature changed by the power of God and live a continuous life of producing bad fruit. We teach in direct contradiction to the words of Jesus Christ. Jesus said a good tree cannot produce bad fruit. Does that mean that a genuine Christian cannot sin? No, you go to even the most spectacular tree and it is going to have some bad fruit on it, but the full course, if you look at the entire harvest of that tree, you will say, "It is good."

In the same way Jesus says if someone has been truly regenerated by the Spirit of God, if they have truly become a new creature in Christ it doesn't mean they will be sinless, but when you look over the full course of their lifestyle you will see good fruit. Their life will be marked by good fruit and we teach just the opposite in the Southern Baptist Convention. We teach against Christ on this. We tell men, "Yes, you are saved and you can live like the devil and you are still saved because salvation is by faith," because although we try to teach the doctrine of justification, we have totally forgotten about the doctrine of regeneration. And do you want to know why? Because all the famous evangelists have turned the doctrine of regeneration and the truth of being born again into nothing more than a mere human decision that you can make, an evangelist will assure you, it will only take five minutes of your time.

It is like a church sign. It is getting very popular on church signs to put this. Salvation even a cave man can do it. No, salvation, only the blood shed of Son of God can do it.

⁶ Matthew 7:18.

I saw a Baptist pastor a while back and he was all upset because all these Baptist churches taking Baptist off their signs. I said, “Praise God. They weren’t Baptists anyways.”

He says:

“A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.”⁷

Now look at verse 19. Brother Paul, why do you say these things? Why are you preaching so hard? Why are you trying to be so cutting? Why are you trying to wake people up? Why the sound of the alarm?

“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”⁸

In the context, even if a tree has prayed a prayer and made their decision and raised their hand and walked down an aisle and everything else, but if that tree does not bear good fruit, it is cut down by God and God throws that tree in the fire.

Isn’t it amazing? All these popular TV preachers, many of them, there are some good ones, a few of them, but most of these popular guys when it comes to the doctrine of hell they will go, “Well, we don’t, you know, we just want to teach on the words of Jesus.”

Now either when they say that they are either immoral or stupid. Why? Because you want to know something? If it were not for the teachings of Jesus Christ we would know almost nothing about hell. Almost no one else in the Bible talks about hell. You see glimpses of hell. Almost everything we know... if you are going to write a book on the biblical doctrine of hell you will spend almost all your time, 99 percent of your time in the gospels, because Jesus is just about the only one who ever taught on hell. So when Robert Schuler gets up and says, “I don’t teach on hell, because I just want to teach the words of Jesus,” he is a liar. Because Jesus spoke on hell more than absolutely everybody else put together. I have often wondered why that is. Maybe he was the only one who could make known its terrors. Maybe he is the only one brave enough. Maybe he is the only one who loves enough.

Where are all the sermons on hell? Where did they go? Is getting your best life now really what is important? Wouldn’t it be better to rot in a prison for all the 80 years of your life and be saved from hell rather than to get your best life now and perish?

I will not lose sleep—understand this—worrying about whether or not you have self esteem. I will not lose sleep worried about whether or not you feel like you have purpose in your life. I will not lose sleep. I will not be interceding tonight because your checkbook doesn’t balance. It will be because you are going to hell. That is why we preach.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Matthew 7:19.

I was preaching at a very posh church and one of them said, “You preach like a mad man.” And I said, “Then sit there and listen to a mad man rage,” because I am talking about maddening things. Paul himself said, “If I am out of my mind it is for God.” This is not about getting some course on how to just be better at life. This is the fact that every man, woman and child is born enroute to hell and the only thing that can save them is a recognition of their evil nature in their sin and to lose all hope in every bit of human merit and virtue and throw themselves on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. That is it. That is what it is about. Christianity is not morality. Put up 10 commandments all over this country. It is not going to do anybody any good. They will just hate it more. Christianity is not just about being good people. It is about God redeeming a people for himself through his Son Jesus Christ.

People are going to go to hell. And listen to me. You hear preachers say they go to hell after God puts up every barricade possible to stop them. God doesn't throw anybody in hell. He tries to stop men. Again, if you believe that, then you do not believe Jesus Christ who said, “Don't fear men. Don't fear Roman soldiers who can kill your body. Fear God who can kill your body and throw your soul in hell.”

My God is not like that. Most people's God in America is not like that. But then, again, they have never read the Bible. They don't have a biblical God. This God of the Bible is disturbing.

He finishes in verse 20.

“So then, you will know them by their fruits.”⁹

Again, it is like Jesus knows. He is so brilliant. Just the fact that he put this statement at the beginning and the end proves to me that Scripture is inspired. The wisdom of Chris and the Holy Spirit inspiring this writer, the wisdom. It is as though he is looking into the future. And he is ... he is not looking into the future, but he knows. He knows what? He knows men. He knows their concepts. He knows their capacity to take vital spiritual truth and reduce it down to some little cliché that they nod their head to. I am saved. I know I am saved because I was there when it happened. I am saved. I know that I know that I know. My preacher told me I was saved. And Jesus says, “You will know you are saved by your fruits.”

Now don't you be judging me. You can't tell a book by its cover. You don't know what is in my heart. I am saved. Jesus says, “That is a lie and you will believe it straight to hell.” You will know them by their fruits.

And then he goes on and listen to these terrible words.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord.’”¹⁰

⁹ Matthew 7:20.

¹⁰ Matthew 7:21.

Now you need to understand something about Hebrew manner of speaking and writing. When an American wants to emphasize something he raises his voice or if he is writing he will put it in bold letters or something. When a Jew wants to emphasize something he practices what we call as Hebrew parallelism. He will say something and then say it again. For example, Isaiah says:

In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy,"¹¹

Notice it doesn't say "Nice, nice, nice." Notice it doesn't say, "Merciful, merciful, merciful." Notice that it doesn't even say, "Love, love, love." It says, "Holy, holy, holy." Wise theologians know what means. The first thing you need to know about God, the supreme thing you need to know about God is he is holy.

Amazing. I was preaching a meeting a while back. This was several years ago, actually. And I preached just one night on the holiness of God. And a group of men came up to me afterwards and go, "Mr. Washer, we have got a problem with you." So ok, what is the problem? You preached on the holiness of God and not once tonight did you mention the love of God.

I said, "I have got a problem with you three men. Last night I preached on the love of God and not once did I mention the holiness of God and none of you had a problem with it."

So what he is saying here is this. Not every person who claims to be my disciple and emphatically declares me to be Lord will enter into the kingdom of heaven. John MacArthur says this. "Do you want to know what your confession of faith in Jesus Christ is worth? Absolutely nothing, because here we have people emphatically confessing Jesus to be Lord and he says this, 'Not everyone who tells me that will enter into the kingdom of heaven.'"

Then what is the sign or the mark of a person who is actually Christian, saved and going to heaven? He says this.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter."¹²

I look at that, will enter. Now notice. He does not say that we are saved by doing the will of the Father. That would be works salvation. We are saved only by faith in Jesus Christ. But the evidence that we have truly believed and that we have truly been regenerated and

¹¹ Isaiah 6:1-3.

¹² Matthew 7:21.

that we are truly Christian is that our life changes because our nature is changed and it must produce real changes in our lifestyle and the lifestyle of a true Christian is they are concerned about what the will of God is and they seek to obey that will and when they do not follow that will, the Holy Spirit convicts them of their sin and they are broken over it and they confess it and they start all over again. But most people who have prayed that prayer and asked Jesus Christ to come into their heart, they don't even know when they are sinning.

I want you to know if you are a Christian here maybe you are thinking to yourself, you know, I stumble. I do this. I do that. I want to be for Christ and I struggle to be with him, but, man, is he talking about me? Listen. First of all the question is: Is it true what you say? In your heart is it not just a vain thing you say, but is it evident that you desire to be like Christ and you want to do his will and know it? Well, then your struggling over sin may be the great evidence that you are born again, that God is doing a work of sanctification.

Remember, the evidence that you are a Christian is not that you are sinless. It is that when you sin you are broken over your sin. It breaks you into a million pieces, but God's comfort and grace comes and picks you up and sets you back on the path again and encourages you to go on. Sometimes you get up in the morning and you don't want to read the Word just like sometimes my heart is dull, but when we go through the day, we feel so convicted about what we have done and we realize I have got to get into the Word. I need prayer. I need help. I need to grow. That is sign of Christianity. But for many in our churches today they can go throughout the entire week and never crack a Bible and it doesn't bother them a bit. They can never pray and it doesn't bother them a bit. They have never mourned over their sin and it doesn't bother them a bit. They can look like the world, act like the world, dress like the world, talk like the world, love what the world loves, try to imitate the world in everything, but bless God they are saved because their preacher told them so because one time in their life they prayed that little prayer.

Oh, my, how we ought to be afraid. And then when he says:

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'"¹³

Do you know what is amazing? I will talk to people who bear no fruit in their life, but claim to be Christians and I will say, "Well,..." I will start talking to them. I will press the point with them. And then they will go, "Well, I know I am saved."

And I say, "Well, let me ask you this. If you were before the Lord right now and he asked you, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' what would you say?"

¹³ Matthew 7:21-22.

You would be surprised how their answer begins to be mixed with works. Well, you know, I just believe Jesus. I am trying to do good. You know, I go to church. I want to read my Bible.

Listen to me. Just listen to me for a second. The argument this person is putting forward demonstrates they are lost. If a true Christian were to stand before the Lord, a true Christian and the Lord made a mistake, which is not going to happen, but if he did make a mistake and said, "Depart from me. I never knew you," the Christian, the true Christian would not stand there and go, "But, Lord, I preached. I did miracles. I cast out demons in your name. I mean, I was a good guy. I went to church. I was more moral than the guys I worked with down at the factory. I was..."

No, a true Christian if he was going not put forth any argument would say this. "But, Lord, I know that I was born in sin and in sin did my mother conceive me. Lord, I know that I have broke every command and I have no virtue or merit of my own, but, Lord, I trusted. I trusted in the blood you shed on Calvary. That was my only hope."

But you don't see that here. When they are finally pressed as to why they ought to be in heaven they are saying, "Because we have virtue and merit." And most people who have prayed that little prayer live just like the world out in the world. Even though they claim to be Christian, when you start pressing them, eventually they will start saying, "No. Hold it. Now I am a good guy. Stop judging me," instead of, "But Christ is precious to me."

Is Christ precious to you? Don't tell me just yes. Really. Did you ever see a guy that treats his wife really bad, doesn't think about her, goes hunting, fishing, just leaves her alone, locks her in a closet, whatever, just ignores his wife basically? And everyone else around the town looks at him and goes, "Man, that guy doesn't love his wife at all."

Would someone look, listen to your conversations that you have over a week period, listen to what you look at, the books you read, your time in the Word, your time seeking Christ. Would they look at you and go, "Man, that guy has a passion for Christ. Christ is precious to him"?

You see, Christ is not one of the worst thing that happens when a person is born again in a country where there is no persecution. It is difficult. Why? You are born again in a country where they kill Christians. Jesus becomes everything. He is everything. You are isolated from society. You have nothing. Everyone hates your guts. They want you to die. The only thing you have is Christ. And also the fellowship of other believers is precious. I remember during the war in Peru. Bombs blowing up everywhere, people being killed like crazy. They blow out the windows of our church with a bomb, machine gun fire, everything else. You should have seen that fellowship. Everyone was so poor we would wait in lines to get rice, wait for three, four hours to buy a bag of rice. No one had anything. And so, man, getting to church on Wednesday you would do anything to get there.

Prosperity, regardless of what all these preachers say, prosperity is one of the greatest dangers to Christianity.

He goes on and he says this, verse 23.

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" ¹⁴

Now I want you to understand a few things. First of all, let's go back to the beginning when Jesus said, "The gate is small and the way is narrow and few are those who find it." And let me give you the proper interpretation of this in its context. Most of us think, well, what Jesus is talking about is here is all the world over here, the Atheists and the Agnostics and the movie stars and all the people that hate God and then here is this little group of people that identifies with Christianity so the most of the world is on the broad way and here all of us who are in church on Sunday morning we are in the narrow way. No. That is not what Jesus is teaching. Jesus is not even talking about these people at all. He is not. Jesus is saying this. Among those who call themselves my disciples, few will enter in. That is what Jesus is teaching. He is not even concerned about the world at this moment. Jesus is teaching us among those who call themselves my disciples, my people, the Church, Christians, few of those will actually be saved. That is what Jesus is teaching.

I can prove it to you. Look. He says here:

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. ¹⁵

But then he goes over into 21 and he says:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven." ¹⁶

He is talking to people who say Jesus is Lord. He is not talking to Atheists, or Agnostics or anything. He is saying, "Of all the people who gather together in my name and call me Lord, Lord, most of them are on the broad way even though they claim to have passed through the small gate and most of them will not enter into heaven, because he who says Lord, Lord will not enter into heaven, but he who does the will of my Father. So my true people, in the midst of all these people who claim to know me, the true ones will be marked out by this. The doing of my Father's will."

Now just watch something here. Isn't it amazing that the same thing that the corporate world has accepted as a fact, the Church has come to accept as a fact. In any corporation

¹⁴ Matthew 7:23.

¹⁵ Matthew 7:13-14.

¹⁶ Matthew 7:21.

you will discover what they know. Twenty percent of the people do 80 percent of the work and 80 percent of the people do nothing. That same thing is applied I church growth. The reality that only 20 percent of the people at best in a church is actually going to do any sort of service at all. Everyone else is just going to attend and if they do that they say hallelujah.

Look what Jesus is saying. “Of all those people who congregate in my name and call me Lord, Lord, few of them are on the narrow path and few of them will make it.”

Now he goes on and he says, verse 23:

“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you.’”¹⁷

I hear people all the time saying, “I know Jesus.” But that is not the question. The question is: Does Jesus know you? If I were to go up to the White House and say, “I am going in.” They would arrest me. And as they are dragging me off, “I know George Bush. I know George Bush.” They are still going to carry me away. But if while they are dragging me off George Bush walks out of the White House and points to me and says, “I know Paul Washer,” I am going in.

Do you know Jesus? That is not the question. Does Jesus know you. Because he says on that day to the multitude of people who call him Lord, Lord, he is going to say to them, “I never knew you.”

Now listen to this. Listen. To know—I know this is written in Greek. Jesus was a Jew. A lot of Hebrew concepts passing over from Hebrew to Greek. When the Bible talks about know this is what Jesus is saying. “Depart from me, you who called me Lord, Lord. Depart from me. I never knew you. We never walked together. We had no intimate relationship together. We did to fellowship together. I was to your friend and you were not mine.”

What association do we have? You prayed a prayer one time. You squeezed the evangelists hand. You walked an aisle. Do you think I am a machine, a trinket you can... that can be bought by you putting in a coin and pulling a lever? You had no relationship with me. You went to church on Sunday. I wasn't in most of those churches you went to.”

Do you walk with him? Is he a living daily reality in your life? Do you know him? The word means such intimacy that it is used for sexual relations in the Bible, intimate fellowship with Jesus. When was the last time you can across the passage of Scripture about Jesus and you just wept at the beauty of it and said, “Oh, Jesus, you are so wonderful”? When was the last time the Holy Spirit convicted you of your sin and you wept over your sin? When was the last time you called your other Christian friend and said, “Let's get together and just talk about Jesus”?

¹⁷ Matthew 7:23.

We think people who do that are just spiritual Christians. And we are Christians, but we are not spiritual. I think it was either Vance Havener or Tozer who said Christianity has become so sub normal that when any Christian starts acting normal everyone calls him abnormal.

Do you walk with him? Do you love him? Don't say, "Oh, yeah, in my heart of hearts." No. Can some one look at your life and go, "Man, that guy loves Jesus. I mean sometimes he is a bull in a china shop and sometimes he is a mess and sometimes he shoots off his mouth and sometimes he is not this and that and sometimes he is... but he really does love Jesus." Would they say that about you?

This is the most terrifying part of all this.

“DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.”¹⁸

ἀνομία (an-om-ee'-ah) without law. Those of you who lived without law.

Now let me put this together for you in its context. Jesus says this, now listen. This is terrifying. “Depart from me all of you who called me Lord, Lord and claimed to be my disciples and yet you lived as though I never gave you a law to obey. You did everything you wanted. You did not consult my law. You did not consult my teaching. You did not seek to conform you life to it. You went to college. You didn't ask me if that is where I wanted you to go. Every part of your life, you just did it because everyone else did it. You followed Brittney Spears, but you ignored my Word. You followed Bill Gates, but you had nothing to do with me. You were in fashion magazines to tell you how to dress and you didn't even look at my Scripture. You talked like the world. You walked like the world. You smelled like eth world. You did everything like the world because... Depart from me. You called me Lord, Lord, but you lived as though I never gave you a law to obey, that I never gave you wisdom to listen to. Not only did you not know me, you didn't even honor my law. You didn't even care to know what it was, but you were sure to find out what everyone else was wearing and doing and thinking. But you didn't care about my law.”

Do you honestly think you are Christian?

Finally, I am going to sum up 24 through 27. This passage is probably the most distorted passage in all of preaching, because here is the way most people teach this. Well, if you are a Christian, you need to build your life on the Word of God so that it will be solid and sound and when the storms of life come, you will be secure. You will have a good life, a strong life. And, boy, if you build on the sand, you know, you are out there as a Christian and you are living in a way that, well, you are not building your home on the Word of God. Then when the storms and trials of life come, it is just going to knock you over.

¹⁸ Matthew 7:23.

That is not what this teaches at all. What it is teaching is this. These words that Jesus has just taught he is saying, “The ones that hear what I am saying and obey me, they are like a man who builds his house on a rock and when the storm, the terrifying storm of God’s judgment falls upon this land they will stand. But the one who hears these words and ignores what I am saying, then when the storms of God’s judgment falls upon this world, they will be destroyed.”

You say, “How can you say that, brother Paul?”

Well, let’s just look at the context for a moment. Let’s go back and this is where we are going to finish, verse 13 and 14. We have two different gates and two different ways. One gate leads to life. The other leads to death. One way leads to life, the other way leads to death, eternal destruction, hell. We have two different types of trees. One tree is a bad tree and it bears bad fruit and it is cut down and thrown into the fire. The other is a good tree with good fruit and it is saved. It is useful to the master and not cut down. Then there is the one who professes Lord, Lord and does the will of the Father and goes to heaven. Then there is the other one who says Lord, Lord, but does nothing of the will of the Father and is thrown in hell. Then there is the one who comes to him and the Lord says, “I never knew you.” And the other one that comes to him, “I knew you.” And then there is this one who listens to the words and hears it and he is saved from the judgment of God and then the other one who listens to the Word and does not hear it and is destroyed by the judgment of God.

I know that many of the things you have heard today you have heard before, but you have probably not heard it from a man so arrogant as me, a man so sharp in his tongue, so mad and angry and critical and unloving. I have heard it all before. But if I were to stand toe to toe with a Greek scholar on this passage he would agree with me. Jesus is not sitting in effeminate dress on the rock holding children and telling people this story. Jesus is talking about eternal salvation and damnation. How do you want me to talk about it? What do you want me to do?

And the people in the church are sleeping. And they will die in their sleep. Awake and Christ will shine on you.

And a word of warning. There is one on the outside of this building who before some of you will even get to your car he will steal the word out of your heart and you will forget everything I said and go to dinner and have a good time. Beware. We are not ignorant of his ways.

Let’s pray.

Father, your Word has been discharged. Do a work, Lord. But I know that you have done a work. You have spoken truth and I know, Lord, that hearts have been moved. Lord, make it an eternal work that will have some value in the next world. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

