

"There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'All right, then, have it your way.'"

—C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)

Psychiatrist Dr. Stephen Grosz points to research that shows we usually don't respond when a fire alarm rings. Instead, of leaving the building immediately, we stand around and wait for more clues. But then even with more information, we still won't make a move—and sometimes that proves deadly. For instance, in 1985, 56 people were killed when a fire broke out in the stands of a soccer match in England. Close examination of television footage later showed that fans did not react immediately and continued to watch both the fire and the game, failing to move towards the exits.

Research has also shown that when we do move, we follow old habits. We don't trust emergency exits. We almost always try to exit a room through the same door we entered. After a fire in the Beverly Hills Supper Club in Kentucky left 177 people dead, forensic experts confirmed that many of the victims sought to pay before leaving, and so died in a queue.

Grosz concludes:

After 25 years as a psychoanalyst, I can't say that this surprises me. We resist change. Committing ourselves to a small change, even one that is unmistakably in our best interest, is often more frightening than ignoring a dangerous situation. We don't want an exit if we don't know exactly where it is going to take us, even—or perhaps especially—in an emergency ... We want to know what new story we're stepping into before we exit the old one.

This morning... as we conclude our study of the Sermon on the Mount... we will see how Jesus repeated differing scenarios... always involving two choices.... and the only one with the best outcome is very often NOT the one that is chosen. ... Then we will look at the response of Jesus' original audience... to His sermon. ... I don't think Dr. Grosz would be astonished – at all – with their response... or the response by millions of others... down through the centuries... since Jesus delivered it.

Jesus calls for His listeners to commit ourselves. He exhorts us with the challenge - to choose the Kingdom way of living.

The conclusion of Jesus' sermon on the Mount... reminds me very much of the exhortation Moses gave to the Children of Israel – just before they entered the Promised Land. This people had been rebellious and grumbling all through their wilderness wanderings. ... Moses knew that he would not be going with them into the land. God had revealed that to him... and that Joshua would now lead them. This is how Moses concluded his time with them:

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 (ESV)

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

Moses presented a contrast involving only two choices... and only one had a desirable consequence. Jesus concludes His sermon by calling for repentance through several contrasts... and each contrast involves two choices... with only one of them having a desirable outcome.

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Jesus' first contrast is between two gates.

Matthew 7:13-14

With God there are only two paths or two ways. One is life; one is death. One is good; one is bad. One leads to heaven; one leads to hell. The world does not like the fact of only two paths. It wants to believe that there are many paths. ... But no. There are only two. And the one that is life has fewer travelers.

God's people have always been a remnant... (a small minority)... in this world. In Scripture and down through history... it is never the majority who listen to God's voice and decide to follow Him. ... It is always the few... and never the masses.

The reason is not difficult to discover: The way of life is narrow... lonely... and costly. ... We can walk on the broad way and keep our "baggage" of sin and worldliness. ... But if we enter the narrow way... we must give up those things.

Here... then... is our first challenge... that comes with Jesus' gate contrast: *Has your profession of faith in Christ **cost** you anything?* If not... then it was not a true profession. ... You are still on the easy path.

Many people who "trust" Jesus Christ never leave the broad road with its appetites and associations. They have an easy Christianity that makes no

demands on them. Yet Jesus said that the narrow way was *hard*. ... We cannot walk on two roads... in two different directions... at the same time.

We cannot enter at the narrow gate... and at the same time... be tolerant of sin... expect the praise of men... hold hands with the world... indulge the lusts of the flesh... listen to the lies of the devil... and be in step with the spirit of the age. ... This world was intolerant of Jesus. They crucified Him... and will be no friend... to anyone who enters the narrow gate to follow in His steps.

The right way is definitely not the popular way. If you live a godly life... you will often walk the path of life alone. ... But... it is the end of the path that is important!

On the other-hand... the wide gate is easy to get on. There are no restrictions at all! ... You can be a crazed murderer and not be banned from this path. Drug dealer... gang members... You want life-style choices – here is your path. Burger King will not be the only place where you can have it your way. It is so spacious and there is room for everybody.

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The wide way looks wonderful... everyone seems to be having such a good time. ... It is a popular path. If you want to run with the crowd – here is your path. ... But as I mentioned with the narrow path – the end is what is

most important. The wide path gives the promise of the most enjoyable trip... but it's end is eternity in Hell.

We have to choose which path... and we also have to decide who we will follow.

Matthew 7:15-20

The term "*false prophets*" has a wide scope in application. It is not limited to those who have long white beards and dress in robes... predicting future events. Prophets are those who speak for God... They act as His mouth piece. ... Prophets are preachers... and authors... and conference speakers. They are also your Christian friends and family members.. who take a leadership role to exhort you and others on how to live. They seek to influence your spiritual decisions and Kingdom work.

Your decision is whether or not you will blindly follow... or use discernment for recognizing whether they actually speak for God. Those who don't actually speak for God... give every appearance that they do. ... They might know a lot about Scripture. They might seem very kind... and even very giving of their time and resources to help you.

But the closer you get to them... the more you see what fruit they actually bear. One of the first things you will notice is that they readily exert themselves above anyone in the church. (That is what every false spokes-person for God does.) It is persistent in their speech... which has the ungodly fruit of divisiveness. LISTEN – We are not to ignore the bad fruit of anyone who offers themselves as a spokes-person for God. Ungodly

behavior (done frequent enough that it is their character)... is all the evidence you need. ... Don't follow them. Do not participate with them.

One may misjudge what a tree is by looking at its leaves and branches or flowers. But fruit is proof positive of the identification of the tree. Apples are not confused with walnuts or oranges or bananas.

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After speaking about false prophets... Christ then cautions about the problem of false profession. The warning about false prophets was a warning not to be deceived by others. ... The warning about false profession is a warning not to be deceived by yourself.

Matthew 7:21-23

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said of these verses about false profession, "These... are in many ways the most solemn and solemnizing words ever uttered in this world... to open our eyes... to the terrible danger of self-deception and self-delusion."

As a Baptist minister... we value eternal security. We want believers to know that once saved... always saved... and you don't ever need to worry that you might slip up and loose it. ... But this warning is about people who think they are saved... but are not. (Salvation was never theirs to lose.) It is about people who have deceived themselves about the most important matter of life. ... It should cause all of us to earnestly examine

our hearts to make certain that our salvation is real indeed. What a terrible thing to end up in hell thinking you were saved.

I think that we Baptist ministers are guilty of giving people a false security. We are quick to offer assurance of salvation... perhaps on the basis of a prayer someone made... or even a confession of their faith. Without seeing any godly fruit at all in their life (which takes time to develop and see)... we should not be as quick to give such assurance. If there is no evidence of a changed life... through obedience to Christ and desire to follow Him... no assurance at all should be given. – PERIOD!

Notice that a false profession has two trademarks. **First**, the lack of sincerity. (*"Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven"*). Lack of sincerity is one of the great trademarks of false profession. Their profession of faith has never gotten to their hearts.

There is nothing wrong with calling Christ "Lord." In fact it is the right thing to do. But words are not enough, if the heart is not in it.

Second, a trademark is the lack of submission. *"But the one who does the will of my Father Who is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). The person making a false profession has the trademark of not submitting to the will of God in his life. He may talk a good talk and do great works — those things are fine... for Christ does not rebuke them. ... What is wrong is that they do not submit to the will of God in their lives. ... The evidence of salvation is in submission to God (submission does not produce salvation... but it does prove it).

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You know what I find fascinating...? Verse 22 indicates that someone can do many mighty works in Christ's name – and still be unsaved. ... Doing things *"in Christ's name"* is right and proper... but that is not enough. That might be simply because of personal talent and ability. Non-believers have plenty of that.

But here is what I meant: It is scary how well someone can perform in teaching God's Word and in effective ministry around the church... and still be unsaved. But if it is not real in the heart... it makes no difference how great your achievements... you are still unsaved.

This tells me that only God can know who is truly a Christian and who is not. I (or you) cannot look at someone else and say "He is definitely a Christian... but she is not..." It is ultimately only God that knows. But for purposes of our own SELF-evaluation... Is your character such that it wants to do God's will... and whenever He convicts you of sin... you confess it and get right with Him...? Is your heart into following Christ...?

The test is not words, not saying "Lord, Lord," and not obeying His commands. How easy it is to learn a religious vocabulary, and even memorize Bible verses and religious songs, and yet not obey God's will. When a person is truly born again, he has the Spirit of God living within (Rom. 8:9) and the Spirit enables him to know and do the Father's will.

God's love in his heart (Rom. 5:5) motivates him to obey God and serve others.

... ..

Jesus continued to call His listeners to repentance by offering another contrast with two choices.

Matthew 7:24-27

To build "on solid rock" means to be a hearing, responding disciple, not a phony, superficial one. Practicing obedience becomes the solid foundation to weather the storms of life.

The two lives Jesus compares at the end of the Sermon on the Mount have at least three things in common: 1) they both build... 2) they both hear Jesus' teaching... and 3) they both experience the same set of circumstances in life.

The difference between them isn't caused by ignorance... but by one ignoring what Jesus said. ... Externally... their lives may look similar... but the lasting... structural differences will be revealed by the storms of life.

The immediate differences in your life... once you make a decision to follow Jesus... may not be immediately obvious. But eventually... when trials come into your life... and you are tested... you will have the ability to see whether or not your house is built on the Rock... or if it is built on sand. Does your Christian faith... and all that you have proclaimed about the Lord... quickly get tossed aside...? Does your faith collapse... or get washed away with the tide...? Do you handle difficulty different than those

who are in the world...? ... To what degree does your life reflect the directions Jesus gave in this sermon?

This portrayal of building shows what a person is like who hears what Christ says but does not do what Christ says. This man did not take the time to dig deeply for a rock foundation... and so he could build his house in a hurry. ... Satan always has shortcuts to reach our objectives faster than God's time... but every shortcut leaves out important ingredients of life.

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Matthew 7:28-29

Matthew reported that the people were "amazed at his teachings." The Greek word interpreted as *amazed* carries the impact of physical force and implies an element of panic. It suggests that they were practically overwhelmed with his teachings.

The people were amazed at Christ's teaching, both at what He taught and how He taught. "*Astonished*." That is all that is said. Nothing is said about application. The people were amazed but they did not apply what Christ taught them. They were simply amazed at the doctrine and method. They were moved emotionally but not spiritually. Many folk think that if they have an emotional experience at church, that God has really spoken to their hearts. But the emotional experience is worthless without application.

What about you...? Will you be like Jesus' original audience... or will your response be different. Are you ready to apply His teaching to your life?

I have been using the same quote by C.S. Lewis through this sermon. I would like to close with a different quote from him. This one speaks to our unwillingness to God's teaching to our lives.

Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.

C. S. Lewis, from the sermon "The Weight of Glory"