

## Beware of False Prophets, Pt 2

*Sermon on the Mount*

By Richard Warmack

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 7:15-20

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Open your Bibles this morning and turn back to Matthew chapter seven. And without much of an introduction because it took me all last Sunday to just introduce this subject, I want to, if I can, this morning preach to you on what is a really hard subject to preach on, but one that we cannot avoid because it is considered quite important in the Word of God and that has to do with this thing that our Lord Jesus Christ warns us. He warns us here in Matthew chapter seven **verse 15**, "*Beware of false prophets.*"<sup>1</sup> I know that, you know, we have to be very careful with the way we use that language of beware of false prophets. This is closely connected with what has just gone before starting back in verse one of chapter seven. Our Lord God, through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ expressly told us that it is our responsibility to judge. Now I would encourage all of you to judge what I am saying, and I have no problem with it. I encourage anybody that hears this message, just because I say it, it does not make it so. Now, I know you understand that. But it is your responsibility as a child of God to be like those that are at Berea in that they were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they took the things that Paul said and they searched the Scriptures to see if what they said was so. And anything, any man in our generation says... I don't care how many degrees he has or how much time he has behind him. I don't care if he has preached two years or 40 years. It is our responsibility, both you and me to put that man's message under the scrutiny of the Word of God. Because our Lord warns us explicitly here. When he says "*beware*", it is not just if you would, just kind of look out. **It is a warning.** It is kind of like if you see a sign in somebody's yard and it has on the gate, "*Beware of dog.*" That doesn't mean that you climb over the gate to see if the dog is inside the fence. That would be foolishness and ignorance on your part. If there is a warning sign there, if it says, "*Beware of the electricity,*" or beware of something, you stay away from it. I'd say we should be just as careful when it comes to men and women's souls, especially in light of what he said in **verses 13 and 14**, "*Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*"<sup>2</sup> With that kind of a warning, immediately our Lord proceeds to tell us, "*Beware of false prophets.*"<sup>3</sup> So he is telling us something here we need to understand. We need to

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 15:1.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 7:13-14.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 7:15.

remember, **first of all**, I told you this last Sunday, but I will tell you again. **First of all**, what is a false prophet? See, most people when we think about false prophets most people in religion today they would say, “Well, Jim Jones was a false prophet.” They have said rightly. Jim Jones was, indeed, a false prophet. I would say... what was the boy’s name in Waco, Texas? I forgot his name. David Koresh. They would say, “Well, he was a false prophet.” Well, yeah, you are right. Those were false prophets. That is not what our Lord is warning about here. Anybody with any sense religiously, any idea, any understanding of the Word of God, they would readily pick out David Koresh and they would readily pick out Jim Jones and say without apology, yes, that man was a false prophet.

But our Lord adds an interesting phrase here. He said, “These false prophets that we are to beware of, they come to you in sheep’s clothing.” And what is so important about that? It means that whatever their message and whatever their action and activity, they do it in such a way that they appear to be sheep. Now what is a sheep? A sheep is one who has rested in Christ, who believes God’s gospel, rests in Christ’s imputed righteousness alone as their only ground, hope or cause of salvation. That is a sheep.

And so these men that our Lord warns us of, they come to us in sheep’s clothing. In other words, they come to us dressed in, robed in, talking the way that if it were possible they would deceive the very elect of God. So the false prophet, then, is any prophet, any preacher who declares “another gospel”. I don’t care how much we respect them. They might be kind and moral and compassionate and loving and sweet to be around. I know a lot of good folks, and you do too. But if they preach, declare, or believe the wrong gospel, I don’t care how good they are and how sweet they are and how friendly, they are dangerous according to our Lord’s Word. So there are those men and women who would either openly or subtly turn people’s heart to something other than Christ’s accomplished work of redemption at Calvary. This is what I think the point is here that our Lord made. It is not so much they are openly denying the gospel, but in subtle way they direct men and women’s hearts and minds to that broad road that leads to destruction.

Hold your place here. Look at **2 Corinthians 11**. Paul, writing of his concern to these Corinthian believers said that he was jealous of them and he had presented to them and had espoused them and had married them through their, **at least mental agreement to the gospel to Christ**, to Christ and the Gospel. He said, “*I may present you as a chaste virgin,*”<sup>4</sup> **verse 2** says, “*to Christ.*” “*But I fear,*” **verse 3**, “*lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*”<sup>5</sup> Now notice what he says next, verse 4. He says, “For if he that cometh preacheth [WHAT?] another Jesus...”<sup>6</sup> Well, what does that mean? Preaches another Jesus. “*...whom we have not preached...*”<sup>7</sup> So Paul says there is a difference between what I have told you and what these other people are going to tell you. They are preaching another Jesus, ok? “*... which ye have not received, or another*

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<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:2.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:3.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

*gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.*”<sup>8</sup> And then if you will go down and you can read all of it for yourself, read the rest of this chapter. These guys, according to **verse 15**, he says that... talking about Satan and how he is able to transform himself. And how does he transform himself? *“Into an angel of light.”* What is light in the Scriptures? **IT IS RIGHTEOUSNESS.** Satan didn’t come to Eve in the garden and try to get her into some dastardly deed, did he? He didn’t approach her with something ungodly. What did he do? He approached her and said to take and eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. What had God told them? *“The day you eat you die.”* That is God’s plan. And he approached her in this way. He said, *“Surely...”* God said, *“Surely, thou shalt not die.”* Now that is a subtle denial of the truth. And if you will notice **verse 15** he says, *“Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as **[WHAT?]** the ministers of righteousness.”*<sup>9</sup>

Now that is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. As I told you last week, this is the one area where we have got to exercise some judgment. We have got to exercise some wisdom based on God’s testimony alone. You can’t judge me and you can’t judge any other preacher out there as a true prophet or as a false preacher by outward appearance and reputation alone. You can’t do it. That is not the standard. The Lord said of these same Pharisees of whom he warned his disciples to beware of, he warned and told them in chapter 23 verse 28 that they would at least outwardly appear righteous unto men. That is the standard of most people. They look at a preacher, and conclude, he is a righteous man. Based on what? He wears his hair the right way or does he dress right or his personality. Friendliness and compatibility and niceness does not make a man the child of God.

Think about it. Our Lord Jesus Christ, would you not admit he had to be without a doubt seeing he was God incarnate, he had to be the nicest person that ever lived? Would anybody deny that? Nobody was more kind than Christ. Nobody was more compassionate. Nobody was more loving and understanding. Nobody. A woman caught in the very act of adultery brought to our Lord and after her accuser go away he says, *“Ma’am, where is your accusers?”* She looks around, *“There is none.”* *“Neither do I accuse you. Go and sin no more lest a worse thing come on you.”* Now that is compassion incarnate. What did they say of our Lord Jesus Christ? How did they accept him? Did the religious people of his day say, *“Oh, he is the finest, most righteous man ever?”* No, what did they say? They said of him, *“He hath a devil. He is a gluttonous man and a winebibber.”*

So you tell me how the world is going to recognize a person based on character and conduct when righteousness walked among them and when they looked at righteousness, they denied God’s righteousness. We have got to get our standard right .

We don’t judge... listen. Hang on. I want you to like me, but I really don’t care if you like me. Does that makes sense? I am not trying to win friends. I am not. I hope you love me, but I tell you what. Love me in the Lord. Don’t love me because of who I am.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:15.

Our Lord through the apostle Paul... we're not going to read it, but in Galatians chapter one verse six through nine when Paul was exposing those false preachers that had crept into church of Galatia, what was the content of those false prophets message? Folks, it didn't have anything to do with the sovereignty of God or election or any of those. Do you know what they were denying? They were denying the effectual work of Christ, these Galatians, Judaizers that had come in. They said, "Except you be circumcised after the law of Moses, you cannot be saved." Now that wasn't an outright denial of the gospel. They said, "Oh, you can believe in Jesus. No problem with that. **But...**" When you hear that word "**but**," what ought to ring in your mind is "*Beware of false prophets.*"<sup>10</sup> Because if there are any buts connected to the gospel, it's not the gospel. If they tell you that you have to do anything, **it is not the gospel.** "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*"<sup>11</sup>

So Paul said to these Galatian believers, the way you are going to know the difference is by their doctrine, what they say, what they preach. Now what does their doctrine expose? The gospel that they preach, the doctrine that they declare, it has to do with the hope of salvation. It has to do with the ground upon which God can save and forgive and bless and commune with and entitle sinners to all of salvation. And if their doctrine leads sinners to look somewhere other than to Christ and his imputed righteousness alone, period, to church membership or to a profession of religion, or to baptism or to reformation. If they point you to anything where you have got to feel good about your relationship with God, show me that in this book. If their doctrine points you anywhere else other than to Christ and his righteousness alone, it is deadly doctrine and they are found a false prophet, me or anybody else. That is what Paul says. "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*"<sup>12</sup> And you say, "Well, he doesn't define the gospel for us." Go back and read Galatians chapter one verse one through five. He tells you what his gospel is.

Now turn back to our text because this is where we come to it. "*Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*"<sup>13</sup> He said, "They are going to come to you dressed in sheep's clothing, but inwardly what are they? They are ravaging wolves." And then he said this. "*Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*"<sup>14</sup> Now like I told you last week, I know everybody says, "Well, their fruits are their converts." No, no, no, no. That is not what he is talking about in this passage. He is talking about something specific. Just as it is impossible to get the fruit of grapes out of a thorn bush, or to get figs off of a thistle bush, it is impossible for a corrupt tree, it is absolutely impossible for a corrupt tree to bring forth good fruit. They can't produce good doctrine.

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 7:15.

<sup>11</sup> Titus 3:5.

<sup>12</sup> Galatians 1:8.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 7:16.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

How do you know whether a man or is preaching the gospel of God's grace? Does he abide in the gospel of Christ? I have run into so many people who say, "Well, we need to hear more than just Christ and His accomplished death." Paul said this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*"<sup>15</sup> Well, we have got to know more! Let's go back to square one. "*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*"<sup>16</sup>

Now, on the other hand, "*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.*"<sup>17</sup> Now here our Lord applies this to preachers. That is why I read to you Matthew chapter three at the beginning of the service. Now these truths also apply to all men concerning their state or their condition or their standing before the true and living God and the reality of their works. Listen to me. If your state, i.e., if you are not in a right position before God, **everything you do is evil deeds.** Now I know the religious world says, "Oh, no. All you have got to do is just try." If you aren't right before God, if you are not accepted in the beloved, if you are not holy, unblameable and unreprouvable in this sight, everything you do, folks, God cannot accept. Read the book. I am telling you: A person who is in a lost state, unregenerate, unconverted and anyone who is alienated in their minds by wicked works, **they cannot please God**. Do you hear me? You say, "Well, prove that to me from Scripture."

Ok, well, write down this verse. Romans 8:8. Now I won't take it out of context. I can go through the whole chapter and show you what it says, but listen. "*So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*"<sup>18</sup> Can that be any more clear? But... it goes on. "*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ [what is he?], he is none of his.*"<sup>19</sup>

So before you can ever please God there has got to be a great change. There has got to be a change of state which occurs in regeneration and conversion under the preaching of the gospel. We change places where we are no longer alienated in our minds by wicked works. God was reconciled to us at Calvary, folks. He reveals it to us through the preaching of the gospel and we cry out to him as our Father when by his Spirit he reveals to us that we have always been sons. And that is a generic term, children. We have always been children.

Like I told you last week, we have always been sheep. Anyone who is in this state of lostness, alienated in their minds by wicked works, that person in such a state is one who does not have true God-given faith. And without true God given faith according to Hebrews chapter 11 verse six, without faith it is impossible to please God.

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<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 7:18.

<sup>18</sup> Romans 8:8.

<sup>19</sup> Romans 8:9.

But notice the next thing he says. *“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.”*<sup>20</sup> Now I know everybody wants to be a fruit inspector in religion in my generation and want to run around and see if “there has been some great change in their life.” You know they go to church. They are moral. They are kind. They are compassionate.

Context is everything, folks. That is not what our Lord is talking about here. This good fruit is both the doctrine, the gospel and the obedience of a justified sinner. I don’t have time to go there and read this to you, but read Romans chapter seven, specifically verse four. Now that we are married to Christ we bring forth fruit unto God. Before we were married to Christ, all we could bring forth was fruit unto death. And, see it is good fruit because it is produced by one in an unchangeable state of justification based on the unchangeable righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their fruit, their good works, are not the CAUSE or HOPE of their acceptance with God. It is the fruit and the result of God’s grace in salvation. Therefore all Legalism and all self righteousness is removed from such fruit.

Why do you go to church? Why do you give your money? Why do you seek to love God? Why do you do those things? Why do you pray? Men ought always to pray, right? Why do you do them? Do you think because of your prayer, God is pleased with you when you do pray and when you don’t pray he is displeased with you? If you pray he is going to bring you to glory and if you don’t pray he is going to cast you into hell. **That is works salvation.**

We sang it just a moment ago. And I encourage you, every time you sing a word inside this building, please listen to what you say.

My hope is built on nothing less,  
That Jesus’ blood and righteousness.  
I dare not trust the sweetest ‘frain.  
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.

That is where we have got to be.

Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to thy cross I cling.

See, it isn’t called good fruit because such obedience by even a justified sinner equals the perfection of God’s holy law. If you are a justified saints... how many of you have prayed a perfect prayer? How many of you as justified saints, even since God revealed Christ in you, the hope of glory, how many of you have lived one perfect hour? Just one? One perfect five minute span. I’m telling you, religious folks don’t have a clue of this God with whom we have to deal with. I told them Wednesday night. We got to that part in Hebrews where it says, *“Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth.”*<sup>21</sup> Now if you don’t receive chastisement then are you not sons, but you are that bad word, you know,

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<sup>20</sup> Matthew 7:17.

<sup>21</sup> Hebrews 12:6.

bastards that he talks about. And most people say, "Well, you know old so and so is being chastened of the Lord." They see anybody and everybody that has got problems and difficulties and they say the Lord is chastening them.

Does the Lord chasten you for every sin you have committed? If chastening, him chastening, whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, if he chastens me for everything that I do in thought, word and deed, what about when he doesn't chasten me for something I do? How about if the chastening hand of God fell on you for every evil thought in your life, every evil deed, every evil action? How many of us, even as justified saints, we do things that are totally evil and God never deals with us over it? Why? Our chastening fell on Christ. So when he is talking about whom the Lord loves he chastens, he is not talking about dealing with us over individual failures to keep his holy commandments. Look, if he dealt with you and in strict justice and he chastened us for every, single solitary thing we did, there wouldn't any of us be here this morning. We would be beat to death if God dealt with us in strict justice over everything we have done or with everything we haven't done.

Our only hope now and forever is Christ and his righteousness alone, his blood, his accomplished death. And I will tell you what: True believers know that if God were to judge them... and I know this [?] if God were to judge me based on what I have said in this last 20 minutes he would send me to hell [?]. Now he would. Because the command is, "Love God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and all your strength every single solitary moment."

Folks, I can't even control my mind while I am talking. Can you? Think about it folks. We are messed up.

Isaiah got it right. From the top of our heads to the sole of our feet, what are we? An open, unmollified sore. Even as justified saints. We constantly ... the good we want to do we don't do. And the evil we don't want to do that is exactly what we do. The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit lusts against the flesh so that we cannot do the things that we should.

I am tired of people telling me how good they are. Now I don't want you to tell me how bad you are either because I know how bad I am. I live with me. What we need to know is how infinitely great he is and what it took to put away all this inactivity and activity in my life, all of it. [?] not some.

Now the fruit of their doctrine is good, because it glorifies God, it exalts Christ and it removes every ground of boasting in the sinner.

If a man gets up and he doesn't glorify God and he doesn't exalt Christ as the only Savior of sinners and he gives sinners an opportunity to boast in what they have done or not done, he has not preached the gospel and he is found a false prophet.

How do we determine if one's fruits are good. They are found to be good for **three reasons**. **First of all**, these fruits are good, whether it was good works or good work because they are performed by a person who is saved. The only difference between Cain and Abel's gift was Abel was justified before he ever brought that gift and Cain approached God on the basis of his gift. **Secondly**, such works, in light of the testimony of God's gospel, they glorify God, they exalt Christ and they don't give the sinner any room to boast. And, **thirdly**, such works are the fruits of faith and repentance, true godly humility and true godly love as motivated by grace and gratitude. We don't do things to get saved. We do things because we are saved.

People say, "Well, you are just... you just... it is just a matter of semantics. You are just twisting words around." No, it is not. Motive is everything in true religion. If our heart is not right, folks, nothing is going to do because notice the next thing he says. "*But a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*"<sup>22</sup> Now the evil fruit is both the doctrine, the false gospel and the Legalism these men that stood before our Lord brought forth and the works and deeds of lost sinners.

Look over to Romans chapter seven. I told you to read all that, but read this one with me, Romans 7:5. He says, "*For when we were in the flesh...*"<sup>23</sup> Remember in chapter eight he says, what are you? You are not in the flesh. Remember that. He says, "*For when we were...*"<sup>24</sup> What does that mean? We used to be in the flesh. He said, "*For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.*"<sup>25</sup> What does Paul mean by that? When he was a lost man, alienated in his mind by wicked works, what did the law do to him? It motivated him to do right. Right? That is what the law motivates people to do. The law motivates people to get right or get left. That is what it does. It says, "Run, run, run, run."

And he said, "When I had done those works in the law, those motions of sin in me which were by the law did work in my members to bring forth fruit." What kind of fruit was it? In seeking to keep the law, what did he do? He dishonored God, because he thought that his obedience made the difference between life and death.

Now, listen. It is not evil fruit because it is immorality. And not because it doesn't live up to what man's standard of morality and sincerity in religion is. It is evil fruit because it is opposed to God's promise to save you and bless you and keep you and qualify you and entitle you to eternal life for one reason alone. Christ and his accomplished death. It is opposed to God's glory. It is opposed to the preeminence of Christ. It is the fruit of their attempts to obey the law of God. And they are evil. They are evil.

Now look at what he says next. Boy, this is a tripper here. Look at **verse 18**. "*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.*"<sup>26</sup> In other words, it can't bring forth fruit unto death.

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<sup>22</sup> Matthew 7:17.

<sup>23</sup> Romans 7:5.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew 7:18.



Now listen. We know that good trees, even true believers, we still sin, do we not? I know if you think you don't you better read 1 John chapter one. If we say we have no sin we make God a liar and the truth is not in us. So we still sin, even the very best of us.

And I will tell you. The long and the short of it is, folks, we are going to be sinners all our lives. The very best work of the best saint of God, even the apostle Paul, it falls short of the standard of perfect righteousness. That is why I don't want to be found in my own righteousness, do you? That is why the apostle Paul says, "*Oh, that I might be found in him not having my own righteousness which is by the law, but that righteousness which is by the faith of Jesus Christ.*" But now listen to me. A believer cannot bring forth evil fruit. That is what he says here.

*"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit."*<sup>27</sup> Now what in the world does that mean? Well, it means a believer, one who is in a state of justification in their life based on unchangeable righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, based on Christ's imputed righteousness, they can never sin in such a way or such a manner as to bring themselves back under the sentence of death. They can't bring themselves back under condemnation. They can't put themselves back under the curse of the law. They can't because listen to me. God will not charge or impute sin to them.

David put it like this. "*Blessed is he whose sins are forgiven, whose iniquities are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not charge sin.*" That is good news. And that is not an escape clause. And God's children don't abuse it as one.

But notice the next thing. "*Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*"<sup>28</sup> An evil tree can't bring forth fruit unto God. Read **Romans 7:4**. Now that fruit would include true God-given faith. They can't produce it. Where does that faith come from? It is the gift of God. It would include godly repentance. God hath granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life. God granted it. It includes godly fear and godly love and acceptable obedience. If somebody who is in a state of lostness... listen they can be moral and they can appear righteous unto men according to man's standard. They can be religious. And many of them are. But they can't do anything pleasing to God.

And then one last thing, every tree... notice verse 19. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."<sup>29</sup> What is that talking about? It is talking about men and women who die in unbelief, all who reject God's Messiah and everybody who refuses Christ and his righteousness alone as the only ground of salvation, all those who refuse to repent.

Look over at Matthew 7:21. They insist on standing before God and pleading what they believe God wants to hear and pleading what God has enabled them to do rather than pleading Christ and his righteousness as their only hope. Notice verse 21 through 23 and we will quit.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 7:19-20.

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me.*<sup>30</sup>

To me, these last four words are the scariest words in God's whole Scripture. "Ye that work iniquity."<sup>31</sup> And I always think. I pause when I think about that. What were their works of iniquity? He tells us. We preached and cast out demons, we did many wonderful works. I preached. I hope by God's grace I have done some good works. I haven't cast out demons. We don't do that anymore. Is he referring to me? No, the key is this. They are at the judgment and what are they still saying? Lord, we deserve life because we preach, we cast out demons and we have done many wonderful works. Their hope as in what they did, **not in what Christ did.**

God help us to be men and women whose only hope is found in him. I tell you what. Sink or swim, that is where our hope should be is in Christ and his righteousness alone.

Let's stand together and we will be dismissed. I appreciate your presence this morning. The Lord bless you and keep you until we see you next Lord's Day.

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<sup>30</sup> Matthew 7:21-23.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 7:23.