

"PREPARING FOR ETERNITY"

Matthew 7:21-29

In our text tonight, Jesus is wrapping up His great sermon. A crowd of people hung on every word that came from His lips. They were amazed for no one had ever taught them like this before. Jesus laid down the standards for the kingdom of God, then He invited them to become a part of His kingdom ("Enter by the narrow gate").

He warned them about false prophets who would always be there to obscure the narrow gate and to make the wide gate and the broad road that leads to destruction even more appealing. Unfortunately, many people will believe them!

Jesus also warned about the danger of convincing yourself that you are saved and on your way to heaven when, in fact, you are lost and in great danger of hell's torment. Tonight, we are going to examine what I consider to be one of the most thought-provoking, bone-jarring passages in the whole Bible. I challenge you to move to the edge of your seat and listen like you have never listened before. Throughout this message I am going to ask you to consider one question—ARE YOU PREPARED FOR ETERNITY?

1. THE CLARIFICATION

What does it take to go to heaven? That's the issue Jesus addresses here. Let His words sink in. . .

Matthew 7:21... "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."

Do you see the emphasis on the words "Lord, Lord?" Keep in mind this word means "boss or master." It pictures a person who has "denied himself, taken up his cross, and followed Jesus Christ." (Mk. 8:34)

I want you to understand that Jesus Christ is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He told His disciples, "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am." (Jn. 13:13) Jesus is Lord. Therefore, He deserves more than lip service.

That's why He said, "... **But he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.**" To profess Jesus Christ with your lips and then to dishonor Him with your life is unacceptable. Yet, there are "MANY" according to Jesus who seek to camouflage their true spiritual condition by professing that they are saved when in fact they are sadly deceived.

Listen, it is a mockery of the highest order to call Jesus "Lord" while continuing to live to please self rather than to please Him. Jesus said. . .

Luke 6:46... "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

Let me ask you, are you living in obedience to the Lord? Has your life changed since you professed Jesus Christ as your Savior? Your words won't save you!

2. THE DECLARATION

Matthew 7:22... "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?'"

Jesus now catapults His listeners forward in time to *JUDGMENT DAY*. Yes, there is a day in the future when the living God will judge every human being.

Acts 17:30–31... "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, **31** because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

Romans 2:4–6... Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? **5** But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart

you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, **6** who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:

Again, note the emphasis upon their profession—**"Lord, Lord."** Now these were leaders Jesus was referring to. Crowds of people on the broad road listened to them and followed their teachings. Listen to their claims:

"...Did we not prophesy in Your name?" A prophet of God spoke under divine inspiration. But these preached and taught what came out of their own hearts. Their message was culture sensitive and was designed to glorify themselves.

"...And in Your name cast out demons." These people seemed to have the touch of the supernatural upon their lives. *"Jesus, we did it for you,"* they would cry out as they plead their case before the great judge.

"...And in Your name perform many miracles." Theirs was the greatest show on earth! Throngs of unsuspecting people would be drawn to their message and buy into it with little or no discernment whatsoever.

How could people who are lost and outside of Christ pull off these kinds of acts? Listen to these words of Jesus. . .

Matthew 24:24... "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect."

I must ask you before we get to the final truth in verse 23. Are you ready to stand before the judgment of Jesus Christ?

3. THE CONDEMNATION

Matthew 7:23... **"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"**

Look at the first two words, **"And then."** When claims are being made before the Lord of glory, right then the Lord Jesus Christ will render His verdict. Keep in mind,

there will be no appeal process. This is it. There are no second chances, no do-overs, no mulligans. One's eternal destiny is about to be announced.

They made fantastic professions to Jesus. Throughout their lives they sullied His precious name by claiming to be saved when in fact they were living for themselves. I can't imagine the horror of standing before the omniscient Son of God who knows absolutely everything a person has said and done and then to hear Him say, "**I never knew you.**" This is Jesus' profession to them. He is saying here—"I don't accept you!" The word "***know***" speaks of an intimate relationship.

Hang on to Jesus' final words—"**Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.**" These are people who are highly respected in church circles. Now they are objects of the wrath of the Lord God Almighty.

2 Thessalonians 1:7–9... and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, **8** dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. **9** These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power....

Don't you see? Neither your words nor your works will get you into heaven! To say "Lord, Lord," and not obey Him is like giving Jesus the kiss of Judas! Don't be fooled when it comes to your salvation.

Titus 1:15–16... To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. **16** They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him*, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

1 John 2:4... The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him....

Listen to the Word of God. . .

John 3:36... "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Don't be one of those who is condemned at the judgment. Enter the narrow gate today. No doubt this offer reeled in the attention of the amazed listeners. How can a person know for sure they are saved and they are firmly entrenched in God's kingdom?

In August 2000, 118 Russian sailors perished when the Kursk nuclear submarine suffered an underwater explosion and became disabled in the depths of the icy Barents Sea. High-level Russian sources recently told *Time* magazine that some of the men could have been saved had rescue gear aboard the Russian submarine been tested. A floating rescue capsule was located in the rear of the submarine. However, the capsule failed to disengage and surface because of mechanical problems that existed from the time the sub was commissioned. It seems the ship's completion was behind schedule and "*orders from the top*" demanded that shortcuts be taken to make the construction deadline. One such shortcut was failing to test the capsule to see if it could handle the pressure of a rescue procedure. Citation: *Time* magazine (6-3-02), p. 18; submitted by Greg Asimakoupoulos, Naperville, Illinois

For the next few minutes, I want to point you to a test. Without a doubt it is the most important test you will ever take. It is "Life's Ultimate Test." Take your Bible and turn to Matthew 7:24-29. Basically, our Lord was saying. . .

"Saving faith always results in a lifestyle of obedience!"

Jesus was the master story-teller. Like no one else who has ever lived, He knew how to weave a simple story around a relevant and timeless truth. This is exactly what He did when He relayed the story of two men who built two different houses in two different ways. One man was wise. The other man was foolish. So, this final section of the Sermon on the Mount deals with the. . .

4. THE FOUNDATION

First, let's give our focus to the wise man in the story. . .

Matthew 7:24–25... "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. 25 "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.

Jesus said, "He hears these words of mine." The wise man demonstrates his sensibility by listening to the words of Jesus. Solomon wrote the following about wisdom. . .

Proverbs 8:34... "Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at my doorposts."

The wise man who longs to build the right foundation for his life anxiously listens to the words of Jesus because he wants to discover truth that will make his life better.

Not only does he listen carefully, he also "acts upon them." He hears the Word and He obeys the Word. That is the clear meaning here!

James 1:22–25... But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Conduct is radically altered as the wise man hears and responds to the Word. How sensible the wise man is to understand that Jesus never said anything that was meaningless and irrelevant! People must have been leaning forward with great anticipation as Jesus brought his sermon to a climax. Jesus, with the skill of a

master artist, paints a word picture of a wise man building a house. He loved his family and wanted the best for them. He would spare no amount of effort to provide them with comfort and protection.

Jesus said this man **"built his house upon the rock."** In the parallel account, Luke adds even more detail—*"He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock..." (Lk. 6:48)* No doubt, before he began this building project he scouted out the best possible location, laid out the dimensions, drew the plans, and analyzed the cost. The wise man was not haphazard. For him there were no shortcuts!

He knew the foundation was the most important part of the house he was building for his wife and kids. What was Jesus trying to communicate? Your life can be stable if you build it with the right foundation—a solid foundation. Listen to the explanation of the Word of God. . .

1 Corinthians 3:10–11... According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. **11** For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

John 8:31–32... So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; **32** and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Do you desire a stable life—the kind of life that can withstand even the fiercest of storms? You must repent and place your faith in Jesus Christ thus embracing Him as both Savior and Lord. Hang on, there is more to see here.

Israel was known for its dry season and its short but sometimes powerful rainy season. A storm can descend like a mighty hammer. Flood water cascades down the valley. Rain pelts against the house. Wind shakes the house until it seems the whole thing will implode. The little children huddle around their mom and dad. Fear paralyzes them. Wait a minute; the rain begins to let up. Wind that roared a

few moments ago is reduced to a gentle breeze. The house withstands the violent storm! The wise man and his family are secure.

You need to know that your life will be shaken from time to time by a storm. It might be a financial storm, a physical storm, a relational storm, or a career storm. Can you be secure in the storm? Will your life survive? Notice the reason you can be an overcomer—**"for it had been founded upon the rock."** Security in the face of the storms we encounter in this life comes when we have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and we are committed to obeying His Word!

Now let's shift our attention to the other man in this story. What did Jesus reveal to us about him?

Matthew 7:26–27... "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. 27 "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

Like the first man, he too builds a house. Maybe he uses the same floor plan and the same building materials. A passerby could look at the two houses and never tell the difference between the two. Look at Jesus' description of the foolish man.

He too **"hears these words of mine."** Sounds just like the wise man, doesn't it? This man, however, listens out of curiosity. He may even brag on Jesus concerning His speaking ability. The word skims along the surface of his mind and heart without penetrating to soul and spirit.

Listen to Jesus' indictment of this man—"... **and does not act upon them."** Here again we see *the key factor that separates the wise man from the foolish man is obedience*. Yes, he listens to the Word but his life is not impacted by it. No change is made. The foolish man may talk a good game. He may make claims to be a believer and to be an admirer of Jesus and His Word. But, when the truth is exposed, he is labeled as a foolish man! He does what feels right, but it's not the right thing.

Like the wise man, the foolish man must find a place for his family to live. He is willing to take shortcuts to get the job done. He laid out the stones for his floor right on top of the sandy soil. Within a matter of days, he was done. Why, his house looked just as good as his neighbors and with a lot less hassle. Jesus steps into the story and interjects this important point—**“(he) built his house upon the sand.”** Could the house withstand the force of a storm? Only time would tell.

*Do you see the spiritual truth? The most important part of your life is your spiritual foundation. Remember, the foundation is what no one sees. Oh, you admire Jesus and you give a tip of the hat to His words. But, when it comes to life you on shaky ground.

One morning the foolish man wakes up, looks out the window, and sees the storm clouds gathering like a menacing enemy. Rain begins to pound against the house. Out of nowhere a wall of water fills the dry riverbed, envelopes the home, and begins to push against it with massive force. Powerful winds rip against the walls. The children hold on to this mom and dad’s legs as they feel the house move under their feet. Snap. A crack forms in the east and west walls. Water surges into the home until the man and his family are swept away to a watery grave! Why? Because he chose not to build on the rock.

Matt Emmons had the gold medal in sight. He was one shot away from claiming victory in the 2004 Olympic 50-meter three-position rifle event. He didn't even need a bull's-eye to win. His final shot merely needed to be on target.

Normally, the shot he made would have received a score of 8.1, more than enough for a gold medal. But in what was described as "an extremely rare mistake in elite competition," Emmons fired at the wrong target. Standing in lane two, he fired at the target in lane three. His score for a good shot at the wrong target?—0. Instead of a medal, Emmons ended up in eighth place. It doesn't matter how accurate you are if you are aiming at the wrong goal. Reality hits hard. *Citation: Alan Price, Chatsworth, Georgia; source: David Mordkoff, "American Emmons Misses Out on Gold by Firing at Wrong Target," www.Sports.Yahoo.com (8-22-04)*

Don't forget. Jesus is warning us here about the ultimate test—the judgment of almighty God. You can say all the right words, do all the right things, and feel all the right emotions. If you hit the wrong target, you will be sent to hell. Place your faith in Jesus and commit yourself to a lifestyle of obedience!