

## Gospel of Matthew Chapter 7 -- John Karmelich

1. I want to start today's lesson by saying I don't like the cliché, "What would Jesus do"?
  - a) I prefer a similar idea of what would Jesus *want me* to do?
  - b) Jesus paid the price for my sins. I don't have to. The difference between "What would Jesus do" and "What would Jesus *want me* to do" is the fact that our job as Christians is to *follow* Jesus. He is our teacher as well as Lord of our lives as well as God.
    - i) Jesus paid the price so that we *can* have a relationship with God the Father.
2. Which leads us to Chapter 7 of the Gospel of Matthew.
  - a) This is my fourth and final lesson on the Sermon on the Mount.
  - b) The Sermon on the Mount is a three-chapter-long single speech given by Jesus.
  - c) The Sermon can be summed up with the question "Who's in charge here anyway?"
    - i) The main point of the Sermon on the Mount is that our outward behavior starts with our inward attitudes.
    - ii) If we can give control of our inward attitude to God, it will affect the way we respond to God and to others.
    - iii) When I say, "Who's in charge here anyway?" I am asking about living moment by moment and pondering, "Is God in charge of my life right now, or is it me?"
      - a) If it is God, am I thinking and behaving in a way that is pleasing and bringing glory to God?
      - b) If it is me, do I need to "get out of the way" and let God rule?
  - d) Once you see that the Sermon on the Mount is about our inner attitude of God-on-the-throne of our lives, you realize that the Sermon is not lots of different topics combined into one sermon, but it is all applications and examples of keeping God in charge.
    - i) Each different "paragraph" is simply an application or an example of how we should let God rule in our lives.
      - a) Jesus gives illustrations and examples of how to properly live as God wants us to live. Some of the Sermon was to explain what people have heard prior to Jesus, which was bad-interpretation of the Old Testament.
  - e) One key idea to get across is that actually living the life as taught here on the Sermon on the Mount is impossible without the Holy Spirit working in our life.
    - i) The reason I say, "Who's in charge here anyway?" is that when we try to do things on our own strength, we will eventually fail every time.
    - ii) God, the Loving Father, and our "teacher" often knows the best way for us to learn is to fail on our own, and thus we come back to God begging for help.
    - iii) God is too much of a "gentlemen" to interfere with our lives when we don't want him to interfere. He only steps in when we ask God to step in. That is why it is so important to constantly pray, to constantly seek God. In order to keep God on the throne of our hearts, we need to keep God close to us. Our old egotistical nature wants to constantly put ourselves back in charge of our lives.
  - f) With that thought in mind, let's continue with Chapter 7 of this same speech.
3. Verse 1: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. <sup>2</sup>For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."
  - a) Let's start out by saying this is not a verse about eternal salvation.
    - i) Our salvation is determined only by accepting Jesus payment for our sins.
    - ii) Verse 1 is about what people will do to us if we have a judgmental attitude about others in our lives.

- b) Verses 1-2 sound confusing if one reads them out of context of the Sermon on the Mount or out of context of what Jesus teaches elsewhere in the Gospels.
  - i) Consider the fact that Jesus judged lots of people.
    - a) He called the Pharisee's "hypocrites" on numerous occasions. (For example, see Matthew 15:7, 16:3, 22:18, et.al.)
    - b) There is the story of the "rich young ruler". He specifically asked Jesus what must he do to be saved. Jesus then judged his behavior and told him what he must do. (Mark: 10:17-21, Luke 18: 18-21)
    - c) There are the episodes of Jesus overturning the tables in the Temple as the corrupt church leaders were selling "official-only" sacrifices. (Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15 and John 2:15)
- c) The point is Jesus spends a lot of time judging behavior. Now back here in Verse 1 of Chapter 7 it says, "Do not judge". How do you reconcile those different accounts?
  - i) There are a number of theories, all of which have biblical support. I summarized these views in three categories:
  - ii) The first is that Jesus is condemning judging motives.
    - a) Jesus does teach us to judge actions. In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus teaches that if a person sins, we should first 1) tell him, and if he doesn't repent 2) bring witnesses; if that doesn't work 3) tell the church and if that doesn't work 4) ex-communicate him.
    - b) The point is Jesus teaches us to judge behavior and not motivation.
  - iii) The second theory is that Jesus is talking about eternal judgment
    - a) The word for judgment in Greek implies "strong-judgment" or condemning judgment."
    - b) This view argues that we don't know who is and who isn't going to be saved, so we should not judge in that accord. Just as we repented to believe the Gospel, so can anyone else.
    - c) The view is that Jesus, and not us is in charge of all eternal judgment.
      - (1) "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22, NIV)
  - iv) The third view is that Jesus is talking about our behavior as Christians.
    - a) I believe this view fits best in context of the Sermon on the Mount.
    - b) Remember the big-picture idea is about having God on the thrones of our heart, and keeping our egos off that throne.
    - c) Most of us have heard the expression, "when you point your finger in accusation against someone, there are three fingers pointing back at you". (If you don't get this, visualize a closed fist except for one finger pointing at someone. The other three fingers are pointing back toward you.)
    - d) I believe Jesus point is that often the things we accuse others of are the same things we are guilty of ourselves. There is an old joke about the sin the preacher preaches the loudest about, and the most often about is the one he is most guilty of himself! ☺
    - e) This view fits in with the last part of Verse 2 where it says, "with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."
      - (1) One of the laws of physics is that "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction".
      - (2) The same way we treat others is how we will be treated.
      - (3) An old expression that fits here is "what goes around, comes around".

4. Verse 3: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"<sup>4</sup> How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?<sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.
- a) Personally, I always found this funny. It sounds funny to say in effect, "Why do you want to pick out a speck of dust in someone when you have a beam of wood sticking out of your own eye? It is an exaggeration in order to make a point.
  - b) In the original Greek, just like the English, both the words for "speck of sawdust" and "beam of wood" imply they come from the same material (wood).
    - i) The point is the same sin you are accusing someone of is often the same sin you are guilty of yourself, but to a greater degree.
    - ii) It is so easy to criticize someone for something we are guilty of ourselves. Subconsciously our own guilt may be reminding us that what we do is wrong. We don't want to condemn ourselves; therefore it is easier to condemn others.
      - a) There is an old joke that the sin the pastor is preaching on the loudest is the one he is most guilty of himself. ☺
    - iii) Notice by Verse 5 Jesus says it is ok to "remove the speck" from someone else, after removing the "wood beam" from your eye.
      - a) This is another verse to read in context of Verse 1 and "do not judge". Jesus still says it is ok to "remove the speck in your brother's eye" (i.e., point out the fault, etc.) but only after examining your fault.
      - b) The key is humility.
      - c) Let me try to give a practical example. "You know Bob, I want you to know I have a problem with such-and-such. It is not fair for me to criticize you for that problem when I do it myself. I know it is wrong and I ask God to help me be a better person. With that said, I notice that you do this too someone. You may not do it as often as me, but don't you agree with me it is wrong and we need to be accountable to God?"
        - (1) The point is not the exact wordage; the point is humility and sensitivity when we criticize others.
        - (2) Would you want someone trying to get a speck out of your eye? Think how sensitive we are about poking in our own eyeballs, let alone someone else doing it?
        - (3) With Jesus teaching us to examine ourselves before we examine others, he is teaching both
5. Verse 6: "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.
- a) To help understand this verse, first it is helpful to understand the historical context.
    - i) A synonym for a non-Jew ("Gentile") is a "wild-dog". It is the view that anyone who does not accept the God of the Bible is not saved (from a Jewish perspective) and is similar to a wild-dog.
    - ii) As to pigs, one has to remember that pigs were "not-kosher". Jews never ate any part of pigs. In both cases, Jesus is teaching to not teach what is sacred to someone who has no interest in learning more about the Gospel message or the Bible.
  - b) Now let's read this verse in the perspective of the previous verses.
    - i) Jesus just spent five verses talking about how to judge people. The focus is on proper attitude and to judge our own behavior prior to judging others. Examining our own faults first gives us the humility and proper perspective at looking at other people's faults.

- ii) Now Jesus uses an illustration that is strange to our ears, but is understandable to a 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish audience. Jesus is still talking about judging others, but he is stating there are times when we are wasting our time criticizing others.
    - a) There are some, who refuse to change because they don't have a fear of God in their lives. Jesus is teaching *discretion* over when to criticize.
    - b) There are some who just want to argue and express their opinions. They have no interest in truly changing.
    - c) Jesus is teaching about having discernment over when and when not to spend time telling others about Jesus and salvation.
  - c) This verse is similar to several taught in the Book of Proverbs. Here is an example:
    - i) Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,  
For he will despise the wisdom of your words. (Proverbs 23:9, NKJV)
    - ii) One of the great pieces of biblical advice is knowing when, and on whom to teach about God. Some people simply don't have an interest. There are people who are so passionately anti-Jesus or anti-God it is simply a waste of time to talk to them.
    - iii) I have learned the hard way that some people just won't change. I used to spend a lot of time arguing about the Gospel message with people. As I've matured, I learn to discern more.
      - a) This verse is not teaching to avoid discussions or confrontations.
      - b) This verse is teaching that after talking to someone for a while, and you can see you whether or not you are making any progress, and judge whether or not you should continue based on that progress.
      - c) God wants us to use our time wisely. We should not be arguing for the sake of arguing.
    - iv) I'm reminded of an old joke that goes something like this: Don't waste your time trying to teach a pig to speak. It is a waste of your time and it irritates the pig. ☺
- 6. Verse 7: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.
  - a) The three words to underline in Verse 7 are "ask, seek and knock".
    - i) In the Greek, the words are continuous commands. It means to keep asking, to keep seeking and to keep knocking.
  - b) Jesus has just spent the last 2½ chapters asking things that seem impossible.
    - i) He asks us to forgive our enemies, to keep our egos out of our religious acts (praying, fasting and giving in non-hypocritical ways). In the first part of this chapter, Jesus asks us to humble ourselves when we want to criticize others.
    - ii) All of the Sermon on the Mount is an impossible task without God's help.
    - iii) Naturally, that leads us to Verse 7. The only way to ever accomplish anything taught in the Sermon on the Mount is by the power of God working in us.
      - a) Therefore, Jesus then comes to Verse 7 and says in effect, "You can do all of this. In fact, God the Father wants you to live this way for the sake of your own happiness and maturity as a believer. The only way it is possible is to keep asking God, keep seeking God and keep "knocking on God's door" for help to keep God on the throne of our hearts.
  - c) One has to read Verse 8 as a promise to us.
    - i) Jesus promises that if we keep on asking, seeking, and knocking, we can then trust God to answer that prayer.
    - ii) When you come to a promise in the bible, God is now putting His reputation on the line. He is promising that He will answer if we continually seek Him.

- iii) There are critics of the bible who will say, “God is being cruel here. He is saying that if you don’t seek God often enough He won’t answer your prayers”.
    - a) That is not what this verse, nor the bible is saying.
    - b) God is not “holding back” until we pray, say, exactly twenty three times on this issue. God designed it this way for our sake, and not his.
      - (1) We need to constantly keep our focus on God because too easily we get our focus back on our problems and forget about God for the moment. The command to continually pray is for our benefit to continually keep our focus upon God and not ourselves.
- 7. Verse 9: "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup> If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!
  - a) It is hard for us to imagine that God will give us what we want if we ask him. That means He gives us our desires if it is His will to give it. It is not about getting every material thing that we want.
    - i) We think of ourselves as not deserving blessings from God, or that God is not capable or interested in answering our prayers. Therefore, we hesitate to ask.
    - ii) By the way, it is ok to ask for material things. That is what “give us this day our daily bread” illustrates. Just remember God gives us the “yes answer” when it is His will to give it to us.
    - iii) Noticed Jesus says in Verse 11 that “Your Father in heaven give(s) good gifts to those who ask Him”. The “good gifts” are those that are God’s will for us.
  - b) Jesus uses the illustration of a loving father (human perspective) wanting to give good gifts to their children.
    - i) That is something most people can relate to.
    - ii) Then Jesus “throws the kicker”. He then says, “if you then though you are evil” (paraphrasing) “can give great gifts for your kids, imagine how much God the Father, who is not evil, and loves you unconditionally, is able to give you”.
  - c) Now before you start thinking about asking God for that big estate home or that new Mercedes, let’s read these verses in context of the Sermon on the Mount. ☺
    - i) Jesus has spent the last half an hour telling what are God’s standards and expectations of us as believers. Without God intervening it is literally impossible to live by the Sermon on the Mount.
    - ii) So when we ask for “good gifts from God”, we should be asking to live the life Jesus expects from us. That is God’s will for our life. That request will be fulfilled by God. It is given as a promise to us.
    - iii) Our prayers need to focus on what God wants for our live; “Your will be done”.
      - a) Our prayers need to emphasize the principals taught here in the Sermon on the Mount. God, who is a loving father, wants to give us the best things for our lives. He asks that we pray for them so we realize that what God wants is better than what we may want. It is all about bringing glory to God and not ourselves.
- 8. Verse 12: So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.
  - a) Verse 12 is a famous verse. It is often called the “Golden Rule”.
  - b) Jesus wants us to keep in the forefront of our minds, “Are you treating somebody the way you want them to treat you?”
    - i) The Sermon on the Mount focuses on our internal behavior. It is from the “inside” that our outside behavior comes from.
    - ii) If we can keep God in charge on the “inside”, God will be in charge on the outside.

- c) Can you imagine a world where people treat you with the attitudes and principals taught on the Sermon on the Mount?
- i) Imagine people who consider you their enemy to forgive your sins.
  - ii) Imagine people giving in church without making a big fuss about it.
  - iii) Imagine people “turning the other cheek” when you do them wrong.
  - iv) This rule is saying in effect, “what goes around, comes around”.
  - v) It doesn’t start with others (i.e., “why don’t you change?”), it starts with us.

- vi) Jesus is saying, "I want you to be the first to change". Never mind what others are doing, you just do what I command you to do, and I'll take care of the rest.
    - a) "When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him. (Proverbs 16:7, NIV)
  - d) Jesus says that this rule (Verse 12 of Chapter 7) "sums up the law and the prophets".
    - i) Later in Matthew, Jesus was asked "What are the greatest commandments"
    - ii) "Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'" (Matthew 22:38-40, NIV)
      - a) Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18
      - b) He is saying in effect, "if you practice these two commandments, the rest of the commands in the bible are simply commentary upon them.
      - c) That is the same concept here in Verse 12 of Matthew 7.
        - (1) If you are willing to love God with all of your heart, mind soul and strength, and are willing to treat others as you want them to treat you, the rest of the commandments will take care of themselves.
9. Verse 13: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.
- a) These two verses are widely used in evangelism. They remind us that relatively few people choose the path of Christianity.
  - b) Notice that it is a wide gate and wide road that leads to destruction.
    - i) The term and "gates of hell" is used here in Matthew (Matthew 16:18)
    - ii) In John's Gospel, Jesus says he is the gate leading to eternal life (John 10:9)
    - iii) If God has a "wide gate & road" leading to hell, God must know there are a lot of people taking that path.
    - iv) If lots of people are going down the wrong path, it must be appealing.
    - v) The "path to destruction" has lots of appeal. One can see material benefits in this lifetime, and the personal power/prestige coming from "the wrong path".
    - vi) The problem is the eternal perspective. If one only cares our life here on earth, that the "wide" path is the logical choice.
    - vii) Look at this illustration used by Jesus:
      - a) And I'll (a man) say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:19-21, NIV)
  - c) One of the scariest aspects of the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus words, "only a few find it".
    - i) In comparison to population of the world throughout history "only a (relative) few find the way to eternal life". That is humbling thought.
    - ii) It is only those who put their trust in Jesus as one who is ruling over their lives who make it to heaven. We are only saved by what Jesus did for us. If we truly believe that, our actions will naturally follow and our lives will change.

- iii) The best illustration I've heard regarding the "narrow path" is to think of lighthouse off the coast of a harbor. Let's say it is foggy and you can't see the land. The way to survive and not crash the boat is to keep our focus on the lighthouse. If we focus on that homing signal, we will go the right path. It is all about keeping our focus on Jesus.

- a) 'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2, NIV)

10. Verse 15: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. <sup>16</sup> By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

- a) This paragraph warns Christians to watch out for false prophets.

- i) Jesus uses fruit trees as an illustration how to recognize false prophets.

- b) Chuck Smith, of Calvary Chapel gave my favorite illustration about false prophets.

- i) (Paraphrasing) "When you work at a bank, as a teller, managers have you spend a lot of time working with money. You handle it constantly and spend a lot of time carefully examining money. The reason one spends so much time with *real* currently is because the best way to prevent counterfeit currency from spreading.

- ii) Counterfeit money looks a lot like the real thing, and may only have 1% or 2% in differential. It is still worthless if it is counterfeit despite the small amount of difference.

- iii) The same goes for false prophets. The best way to counteract false prophets is to spend lots of time working with "the real thing", which is our bible. If you know your bible, and know the principals taught in the bible, then false prophets will be obvious. "Counterfeit" prophets may be 98% accurate, but are still false teachers.

- c) Jesus starts by saying false prophets "come to you in sheep's clothing".

- i) Let's face it, false prophets don't walk into a church and say, "Hey everybody, I'm a false prophet! Forget what your pastor is saying and follow me". ☺

- ii) They are much more subtle. They may know their bible better than you. They may live their life in a way that is morally respectable. They are outstanding citizens in their community.

- iii) So how do you know when you encounter a false prophet? Easy, look at what they believe. Jesus uses the illustrations of fruit trees. If you look at a tree, and see lots of oranges hanging from the branches, you can pretty much tell it's an orange tree. If you're not sure what kind of tree it is, check the fruit.

- iv) Jesus is calling us to be "fruit inspectors". (Keep this thought in balance with what I said earlier about "do not judge". God calls us to judge actions, not thoughts.)

- a) We are to look at others in the church and see what kind of "fruit" they are producing. Again, the balance is one of a loving attitude and to treat others the way you want them to treat you.

- b) With that said, if someone is teaching false doctrines, we are to watch out for that. It is part of a church's calling to keep out false teachers.



- d) It is important to state that there is a big difference between “healthy debatable issues” and actual false teachers.
  - i) There are things Christians who take their bible seriously debate upon.
    - a) There are minor issues we disagree upon. We understand and respect the “other side’s” opinion, although we know we are right. ☺
    - b) It is quite another to take one of the fundamental issues found in one of the “standard” versions of the Apostle’s creed.
    - c) To deny say, Jesus is God is “crossing the line” between acceptable and unacceptable doctrine and being part of the Christian church.
    - d) Other examples are to deny the Trinity, or to deny that salvation is by faith in Jesus alone.
  - ii) An “Acceptable” difference is wondering what exactly did Jesus mean a few verses back when he said, “Do not judge”. I gave three possible interpretations. Any one, or more than one is correct. It is ok to have a view different than someone else as long as you don’t cause a church-split over a minor issue like this.
- e) Let’s look at the issue of “false-prophets” in context of the surrounding verses.
  - i) Jesus just spent 2½ chapters focusing on keeping God on our “thrones”. It is about letting God rule in our hearts and letting our external behavior be the results of the changes on the inside.
  - ii) The section before this is about prayer. It is only through constant prayer that we keep God close to us and keep the eternal perspective in mind.
  - iii) Then Jesus talks about being on the “right path” for eternal life. That again is about having the eternal perspective.
  - iv) Now Jesus talks about false-teachers. Why does he do this here?
  - v) Because if we are now living in accordance with how God wants us to live, we become good witnesses for Jesus. Therefore, we are now targets for Satan.
    - a) Satan doesn’t mind you reading your bible or going to church.
    - b) What Satan doesn’t want is you to live your life in a way that makes you a good witness to other people. He doesn’t want you maturing as a believer as you will become a good witness for Jesus. Thus, if you live this way, you are now “a problem” to Satan.
    - c) One of the ways he opposes you is to send false teachers.
      - (1) Since Satan knows you desire to be “more like God wants you to be”, naturally, he will send false-teachers to lead you astray.
      - (2) So how do you avoid them? Remember the “money” example. The more we study our bible and learn “correct” doctrine, the more we will recognize “counterfeit” doctrine when it is taught.
      - (3) Jesus is saying it will become obvious. We will recognize false teachers by the “fruit” it produces.

11. Verse 21: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"
- a) I have to admit, Verses 21-23 frighten me. You have to think of the implications.
    - i) Here Jesus is saying on judgment day that someone can call him “Lord, Lord” and still be rejected from entering heaven.
    - ii) Here Jesus is saying someone can prophecy (teach God’s word) and still be rejected from entering heaven.
    - iii) Here Jesus is saying someone can have the power to drive out demons and still be rejected from entering heaven.

- b) So what separates the “saved” from the “unsaved”
  - i) The answer is in verse 23 where it says, “I never knew you”.
  - ii) Salvation requires knowing Jesus. It is one thing to verbally say out the words out loud “Jesus is Lord”, it is another to live it.
  - iii) It is one thing to teach God’s word, it is another to believe it.
    - a) There are many people who get saved by hypocritical preachers. The “receiver” of the Word of God is still saved because their conversion is genuine, but it does not excuse the preacher if they don’t live their lives in accordance with what they teach. (I am referring to false teachers who do preach the bible for the money or the power. I am not saying preachers have to be perfect and never sin.)
  - iv) It is one thing to drive out demons in Jesus name; it is another to have Jesus on the throne of our lives.
    - a) It is amazing to think about the fact a false-teacher can still exorcise a demon! Jesus comments on this elsewhere:
      - (1) “However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” (Luke 10:20, NIV)
- c) Notice Jesus says to these people, “I never knew you”.
  - i) We can take comfort in that fact. If Jesus “knows us”, he can never “un-know” us.
    - a) Once you have that personal relationship, one can read this verse in terms of eternal security.
    - b) This sentence by Jesus is about people who never began to form any sort of personal relationship with Jesus.
    - c) To use a modern idiom, it is about people who only gave Jesus “lip service”. They were never sincere in their relationship with Jesus.

12. Verse 24: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."
- a) I have to admit, whenever I hear this passage, I think of the “three little pigs” story.
    - i) All three pigs suffered from the “wind” of “big bad wolf”. Only the pig that took the time to build a good house of bricks survived the incident.
    - ii) I bet you didn’t know the “three little pigs” story was biblical. ☺
  - b) In a historical context, the audience would have understood this illustration.
    - i) Israel is mostly desert country. In the middle of the summer, all the ground is hard. It isn’t until the rainy season comes when one knows whether or not the ground was sturdy enough to build a house.
  - c) Jesus is saying that horrible things happen to good people as well as bad people. The “storms of life” hit all of us.
    - i) Notice Verse 24 says, “hears these words of mine and puts them into practice” are the ones who survive the storm.
    - ii) Christianity has always been about “putting your money where your mouth is”. The way to salvation is not just “saying” Jesus is Lord of my life”, but to actually *believe* those words and live your life accordingly.
    - iii) If we believe Jesus is God, that’s a good start. It is when we actually practice that and start letting God rule in our lives is when we mature as believers. We are on the “narrow path” toward eternal salvation and eternal rewards.

- a) So what the are “storms” that Jesus is talking about?
    - (1) It could be the disasters that happen in our lives. If people see us praising God and having joy in our heart despite the pain, we become good witnesses for Jesus.
    - (2) When we can “forgive our enemies”, we must have some sort of “storm” or we wouldn’t have those enemies in the first place. When we can act differently than how the world expects us to act, we now become good witnesses for Jesus.
    - (3) One can go down the entire list of themes in the Sermon on the Mount and see how our eternal perspective affects our behavior in this lifetime. The power of God working in us is greater than anything life has to throw our way. That is what Jesus means by if we are standing on a “good foundation”, nothing can get us down.
- 13. Verse 28: When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,<sup>29</sup> because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.
  - a) The Jewish audience was used to hearing rabbi’s give sermons. That was nothing new.
    - i) What was typical was rabbi’s quoting one scholar to give an opinion, and then quoting another scholar to give an opposing opinion.
    - ii) What was unique about Jesus is he wasn’t quoting anybody; he was speaking on his own authority.
  - b) I did a quick check of my bible software where I looked for the words “amazed” and “teaching” in the same sentence in the Gospels. I found nine places where the audience reacted that they were “amazed” at the things Jesus taught, with this passage being one of the nine. (Matthew 7:28, 13:54, Mark 1:22, 1:27, 6:2, 6:6, 11:18, Luke 4:32 and 4:36).
    - i) The point is, it wasn’t just the Sermon on the Mount where the audience was amazed at what Jesus taught. That surprise was common throughout the Gospel stories.
    - ii) The fact that Jesus didn’t quote anyone’s opinion, but only quoted previous Scriptures is saying in effect, “I am the final authority. I know the proper interpretation of the law”.
      - a) There is a belief among religious Jews that when the Messiah comes, he will give the correct interpretation of the law. They were right. Jesus did give the proper interpretation. The problem is that a large majority of the audience refused to accept his interpretation as it went against their own beliefs.
      - b) Not much has changed today. The “wide road” leading to destruction is full of people who don’t want to accept Jesus teaching because they would rather rule over their own lives than let God rule over their life.
- 14. Well, we’ve made it through the Sermon on the Mount in four lessons.
  - a) To the bible veterans who read this, please accept my apology if I have skipped over a favorite point or application.
  - b) One can preach entire sermons on any one verse. I had to choose a “limit” on how much to teach on this important topic and where to draw the line.
  - c) My prayer is that the key points got across over how to apply Jesus teaching to our lives as believers. With that, I’ll close in prayer.

15. Father in heaven, all of us sin and fall short of glory. We desire to have that eternal perspective, to live for eternal benefits and reject the short-term rewards of this lifetime. Our desire is not just to call you “Lord” but to live our lives where you are truly Lord of our lives. You are not interested in our ability to serve you, but our availability to serve you. Help us to change internally and examine ourselves internally so that we may be good witnesses for you as we interact with the world. May you rule over our lives now and forever. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.