

Notes for Matthew -Chapter 7 (Page 1 of 6)

Introduction- Overview of Chapter 7: Finishing the Sermon on the Mount (Chapters 5-7)

1. The question for us is not, "What would Jesus do"; it is "What would Jesus *want me* to do"?
2. We are finishing one speech given by Jesus covering Chapters 5-7.
3. The central theme of the Sermon is all about keeping God on the "throne of your heart".
 - a. Each different "paragraph" of the Sermon is simply an application or an example of how we should let God rule in our lives.
4. This is a moment-by-moment battle, as our egos constantly want us to be in charge.
 - a. God gives us the freewill, so he doesn't step-in our lives unless we ask him.
5. As Christians we should ponder: "Who is in charge of my life right now, God, or me?"

Chapter 7, Verses 1-2: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

1. Let's start out by saying Verses 1-2 are not about eternal salvation.
 - a. Jesus is not saying that if you judge people, you will go to hell.
 - b. Our salvation is determined only by accepting Jesus payment for our sins.
2. Verse 1 is about what people will do to us if we have a judgmental attitude about others.
 - a. Remember that Jesus judged lots of people (e.g., called the Pharisee's "hypocrites").
3. There are 3 views as to what Jesus meant by "do not judge":
 - a. The first is that Jesus is teaching us to judge behavior and not motivation.
 - b. The second view is that we shouldn't judge whether or not people are getting saved.
 - i. If you judge people as if you are "sure" they are saved/unsaved, people will treat/judge you the same way.
 - ii. God can choose to save anybody. We don't know who's "in" and who's "out".
 - iii. The view is that Jesus, and not us is in charge of all eternal judgment.
 - iv. "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22, NIV)
 - c. The third view is that Jesus is talking about our behavior as Christians.
 - i. I believe this view fits best in context of the Sermon on the Mount.
 - ii. The same way we treat others is how we will be treated.
 - iii. This is about getting our ego's off our "judgment throne".
 - iv. Jesus said here "with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."
 - v. An old expression that fits here is "what goes around, comes around".

Verses 3-5: "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? ⁴ 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? ⁵ 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.

1. A paraphrase: ""Why do you want to pick out a speck of dust in someone's eye when you have a beam of wood sticking out of your own eye?" It is an exaggeration in order to make a point.
2. 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.
 - a. Another way of looking at this is, "why are judging other people's sins when you are a sinner yourself?"

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Verses 3-5: (cont.)

3. These verses are to read in context of Verse 1 and “do not judge”.
 - a. 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(s).
 - b. “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (Prov. 15:1, NKJV)
 - c. 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.
 - d. The key is humility and having a humble attitude.

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.

1. It may help to understand the “Jewishness” of the words “dogs” and “pigs”:
 - a. A synonym for a non-Jew (“Gentile”) is a “wild-dog”. Jews believed anyone who does not accept the God of the Bible is not saved and is similar to a wild-dog.
 - b. Pigs are “not-kosher”. Jews never ate any part of pigs.
 - c. 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.
2. Jesus is still talking about judging others, but he is stating there are times when we are wasting our time criticizing others.
3. This verse is similar to several taught in the Book of Proverbs. Here is an example:
 - a. Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,
For he will despise the wisdom of your words. (Proverbs 23:9, NKJV)
4. This verse is not teaching to avoid discussions or confrontations. It is about having discernment about when and when not to continue discussing “Godly things” with those who are not interested. It is about making good use of your time.
5. 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. 😊

Verses 7-8: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

1. The three words to underline in Verse 7 are (1) ask, (2) seek and (3) knock.
 - a. In the Greek, these words are continuous commands.
 - b. It means to keep asking, to keep seeking and to keep knocking.
2. All of the Sermon on the Mount is an impossible task without God’s help.
 - a. The only way to ever accomplish anything taught in the Sermon on the Mount is by the power of God working in us: Therefore, keep asking, seeking and knocking (i.e., prayer).
3. God is promising that if we keep on asking, seeking, and knocking, we can then trust God to answer that prayer.
4. 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. It keeps our focus upon Him.

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Verses 9-11: "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ 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!

1. He gives us our desires if it is His will to give it.
 - a. It is not about getting every material thing that we want.
2. 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.
3. 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. ☺
 - a. Without God intervening it is literally impossible to live by the Sermon on the Mount.
 - b. So when we ask for "good gifts from God", we should be asking to live the life Jesus expects from us. That request will be fulfilled by God. It is given as a promise to us.

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.

1. Verse 12 is a famous verse. It is often called the "Golden Rule".
2. Jesus wants us to keep in the forefront of our minds, "Are you treating somebody the way you want them to treat you?"
3. The Sermon on the Mount focuses on our internal behavior. It is from the "inside" that our outside behavior comes from.
 - a. If we can keep God in charge on the "inside", God will be in charge on the outside.
4. 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)
5. Jesus says that this rule (Verse 12 of Chapter 7) "sums up the law and the prophets".
 - a. Later in Matthew, Jesus was asked, "What are the greatest commandments?"
 - b. "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)
 - c. He is saying in effect, "if you practice these two commandments, the rest of the commands in the bible are simply commentary upon them.
 - d. 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.

Verses 13-14: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

1. These two verses are widely used in evangelism. They remind us that relatively few people choose the path of Christianity.

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Verses 13-14: (cont.)

2. Notice that it is a wide gate and wide road that leads to destruction.
 - a. If God has a "wide gate & wide road" leading to hell, God must know there are a lot of people taking that path.
 - b. In John's Gospel, Jesus says he is the gate leading to eternal life (John 10:9)
 - c. Jesus said, "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)
3. Notice the end of Verse 14: "only a few will find it".
 - a. In comparison to population of the world throughout history "only a (relative) few find the way to eternal life". That is humbling thought.
 - b. 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.
 - c. "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)

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

1. This paragraph warns Christians to watch out for false prophets.
 - a. Jesus uses fruit trees as an illustration how to recognize false prophets.
2. Chuck Smith, of Calvary Chapel gave my favorite illustration about false prophets:
 - a. (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 currency is because the best way to prevent counterfeit currency from spreading.
 - b. "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 the bible."
3. Jesus starts by saying false prophets "come to you in sheep's clothing".
 - a. False prophets don't walk into a church and say, "Hey everybody, I'm a false prophet!"
 - b. So how do you know when you encounter a false prophet? Easy, look at what they believe. Jesus uses the illustrations of fruit trees. Jesus calls us to be "fruit inspectors".
 - c. 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 and attitude and a humble heart.
4. Remember there is a big difference between "healthy debatable issues" and actual false teachers.
 - a. The fundamental issues found in one of the "standard" versions of the Apostle's creed.
 - b. There are many minor issues we disagree upon. We understand and respect the "other side's" opinion, although we know we are right. ☺

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Verses 15-20 (cont.)

5. Why is Jesus talking about false-prophets here near the end of the Sermon on the Mount?
 - a. 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.
 - b. Satan doesn't want you to be a good witness for Jesus.
 - i. Thus, if you live this way, you are now "a problem" to Satan.
 - ii. Since Satan knows you desire to be "more like God wants you to be", he will send false-teachers to try to lead you astray.
 - iii. We will recognize false teachers by the "fruit" they produce.

Verses 21-23: "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. ²² 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?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

1. Think of the implications of what Jesus is saying here:
 - a. Jesus is saying you can call him "Lord, Lord" and still be rejected from entering heaven.
 - b. Jesus is saying you can prophecy (teach God's word) and still be rejected from heaven.
 - c. Jesus says you can drive out demons and still be rejected from entering heaven.
2. So what separates the "saved" from the "unsaved"? Jesus says in Verse 23: "I never knew you".
 - a. It is one thing to say, drive out demons in Jesus name;
It is another to have Jesus on the throne of our lives.
 - b. Jesus said, "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20, NIV)
 - 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.

Verses 24-27: "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. ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

1. I have to admit, whenever I hear this passage, I think of the "three little pigs" story.
 - a. 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.
 - b. I bet you didn't know the "three little pigs" story was biblical. ☺
2. Israel is mostly desert. In 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.
3. Jesus is saying that horrible things happen to good people as well as bad people.
The "storms of life" hit all of us.
 - a. Notice Verse 24 says, "hears these words of mine and puts them into practice" are the ones who survive the storm.
 - b. 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.

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Verses 28-29: “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

1. The Jewish audience was used to hearing rabbi’s give sermons. That was nothing new.
 - a. What amazed the audience was that Jesus wasn’t quoting anybody; he was speaking on his own authority.
 2. Jesus is saying in effect, “I am the final authority. I know the proper interpretation of the law”.
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A “Sermon on the Mount” Checklist

This is not a salvation checklist, but one of maturity as a follower of Jesus.

This is a list of ways you can ask God to help you live the life God wants you to live.

It is not about trying harder, but asking God to work through you:

(The numbers below are the chapters and verses from the Gospel of Matthew)

1. Do you “hunger” for the kingdom of God? (5:2-6)
2. Are you rejoicing over the persecution (or ridicule) you have received as a Christian? (5:11-12)
3. Are you “salt and light” for Jesus? (5:13-16)
4. Are you trying to get into heaven by being “a good person” (should be no!)? (5:17-20)
5. Have you thought about killing anyone? How about hatred toward someone? (5:21-26)
6. Have you lusted after someone other than your spouse? (5:27-30)
7. Have you sworn to a commitment and said something more than “yes” or “no”? (5:33-37)
8. Have you “gone the extra mile” in service? 5:38-42
9. Do you love (have compassion) or have prayed for your “enemies”? (5:43-48)
10. Do you have a grudge in your heart that you haven’t forgiven? (6:12)
11. Can you read the Lord’s Prayer with sincerity in your heart? (6:9-13)
12. When you fast or give to God, do you make people aware of your actions? (6:1-4, 16-18)
13. Are you more concerned with laying up treasures for heaven, or for earth? (6:19-24)
14. Are you worried about something that is taking your focus off of God? (6:25-34)
15. Do you have a judgmental attitude toward people? (7:1-6)
16. Do you find your life one of continual asking/seeking/knocking on God’s door? (7:7-12)
17. Are you treating people as you would want others to treat you? (7:12)
18. Can you generally spot a false-prophet by their fruits (i.e., know the basic doctrines of the Christian faith) and know when someone is teaching something else? (7:15-20)