

By Their Fruit – Part 1

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Bible Text: Matthew 7:13-20

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Let's open up our Bibles to Matthew chapter seven, Matthew chapter seven. It is a great privilege for me to be here tonight, a great, tremendous privilege to speak forth God's Word. Matthew chapter seven verse 13.

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.

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. 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?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'¹

Men who have traveled with me—I spend a great deal of time preaching outside the country—and men who have traveled with me have been amused at the fact of how differently I preach outside of America than when I am in America. And a young man asked me about that one time.

They said he said, "I just don't understand." He says, "Sometimes in America you are like a flame thrower. When you are in Nigeria in the north or in Eastern Europe it is much, much different, your preaching. Why is it this way?"

¹ Matthew 7:13-23

And there is a reason for it. A great deal of callousness, a heart like a stone requires a hammer and the thing that has made us so calloused in America is cultural Christianity, a Christianity that does base itself upon the Word of God nor upon historical Christianity as we study it in our history books, but a Christianity that has been warped, transfigured, deformed to fit American culture that even atheistic sociologists say is immoral and superficial.

When you are preaching to a group of persecuted Christians who could die any day in Northern Nigeria—and many of them do—who walk to church with their Bibles openly so that their persecutors can see them, there is not need to talk to them about a Christianity that lacks truth or a Christianity that lacks zeal. But when you are in America—and especially the Bible belt, where everyone is a social, cultural Christian—and yet the very people who call themselves Christians will deny the very tenets of Scripture, a whole different sort of preaching is required.

And we are going to look at a word tonight from Jesus Christ that hits home very, very hard for American Christendom, Christianity in America.

Now first of all Jesus says something. He says:

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.²

Now here we have two different things. We have a gate and we have a way and we need to look at these two things. It is very, very important to look at them. First of all, the gate. Other places Christ refers to himself as the door. What is the gate? What is the door? It is the very person of Jesus Christ. But as we explained last night, Jesus Christ, the Son of God became flesh, lived a perfect life before the law of God, by the ordained plan of God went to a cross. On that cross he bore the sins of his people and all of the wrath and holy hatred of God against the wickedness of man fell upon Christ on that cross and he was crushed under the justice of his own Father to satisfy the justice of God that God might justly pardon the wicked.

He did that. The third day he rose again from the dead and ascended up to the right hand of God on the 40th day. And there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we might be saved.³

Christ himself said, “I am the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father.”⁴

² Matthew 7:13-14

³ See Acts 4:12

⁴ See John 14:6

Paul said what? There is one God and one mediator between God and man and that is the person of Jesus Christ.⁵ He is the gate. He is the door.

The way to heaven is not multiple choice. There are not many roads to heaven. There are not many ways to heaven. There is one way, according to Jesus Christ. And not only according to Jesus Christ, but simply according to classical logic.

I will give an example. I was preaching in a university town a few years ago and a young man came up to me, a young Jewish boy came up to me. He was absolutely furious and he said, "I am furious with you because you say Jesus is the only way." He said, "I believe that Christianity is a way, that the Muslim faith is a way and the Jewish faith is a way."

And I said, "Young man, that is a complete logical contradiction."

I guess that is why they don't teach logic anymore. It is a logical contradiction.

I said, "There is only a few possibilities that are logical with that statement. There is this possibility, one, that the Muslim faith, the Jewish faith and the Christian faith, all three of them are wrong. That is a logical possibility. The other possibility is one of them is right and the other two are totally wrong. But it is impossible, logically, for all three of them to be right when all three of them say completely different things about how to be saved. Someone has to be wrong."

He said, "Well, I just don't like that."

Well, I know. The problem is logic, sensibility has been replaced by emotionalism and rhetoric, ideology and everything. But we have to look at something. Jesus Christ is either—as C.S. Lewis said and I don't agree with everything C.S. Lewis said—but as he said and said correctly, "He is liar, lunatic or Lord." And that is just all there is to it.

And that is the reason...and let me just stand back for a minute. Whenever I am preaching like this someone will say, "Well, that's your opinion."

Well, how do you interpret the words of Jesus Christ? Was that just his opinion?

And then this. I am not so bold as to think, or naïve that wisdom was born with me or that it will die with me, but here is something you need to think of. I stand in the center of historical Christianity, 2000 years of Christianity that says and has died in order to say, "Jesus Christ is the only way." And then we come along today with our new churches that seem so seeker friendly and so culturally adaptable and likeable and socially acceptable and come back with a completely different thing.

Well, they have that right, but they are no longer Christian. Jesus said, "I am the way."⁶

⁵ See 1 Timothy 2:5

⁶ John 15:6

And he didn't say, "I just teach the truth." He says, "I am the truth and I am life." And outside of him there is nothing.

Now in modern day Christianity among the most, the greater part of those who profess faith in Christ, that is not a debatable thing. Most Christians, even those who may just simply profess it will agree that Jesus made that statement and that Jesus is, well, he is telling the truth. He is the only way.

But here is something that I want us to look at. Let's look at the statement again. He says, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction."⁷ What is he talking about there? All the other claims of all the other religions.

You see, you can be standing here and you can walk a thousand miles this way and be in falsehood and you can walk a thousand miles the other way and be in falsehood, but to be in the truth is like walking on the edge of a razor blade. The way of falsehood is wide. You can be wrong in so many ways. But you can be right in only one.

And that is the thing about truth and that is the problem with truth. If you are going to say there really is a truth out there and it really can be known, then it is exclusive. And if you are going to believe something to the exclusion of other things you can't have your cake and eat it, too.

And that is why early Christians were referred to... In the Roman Empire early Christians were referred to as Atheists. Did you know that? That was one of the greatest reasons why early Christians were persecuted. They were persecuted as Atheists. Why? Because they stood up to their Roman culture and they said, "No. All the other gods are false." They denied all the other gods in the great pantheon of gods. They said, "All the others are false and wrong. Christianity, Jesus Christ is Lord."

Now, if you want to depart from that you can, but you are no longer Christian.

Ok. Now he says, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to [where?] destruction."⁸ Destruction. What is he referring to?

Later on he is going to go...in verse 19 he is going to clarify it a bit. He is going to say, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."⁹

I remember a while back—and I can name him because he ought to be named—I was listening to Robert Schuller give some sort of talk there at his church and I was amazed that he stood up and he said, "Oh, we don't preach about hell here. We don't...what we preach are the words of Jesus," supposing, trying to make us believe that hell was something that Moses talked about and that the apostle Paul talked about, but that Jesus

⁷ Matthew 7:13

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

never spoke about. He says, “We are not interested in talking about hell. We simply just want to speak the words of Jesus.”

And I’m thinking, “There’s two possibilities. One, the man is not a theologian whatsoever and has never studied or, two, the man is a liar.”

Why? Because Paul almost never speaks of hell. If it were up to Paul we would know nothing about hell. If it were up to Moses we would know almost nothing about hell. There might be a few references to it in Psalms. Everything we know about hell comes from Jesus.

So when you see these people that will get up there and they will start saying things like, “Well, you know, we just want to deal with Jesus here. We don’t want to deal with Paul the apostle because we all know that he had his problems and Moses, of course, that is the law and that is the Old Testament, but we just want to deal with the words of Jesus.”

You either have no integrity in that statement you are making or you have not read the Bible because everything we know about hell comes from this Jesus that you say is so loving.

Ok? So he is talking about there are many, many ways and those many, many ways, where do they lead? They lead to destruction. They don’t lead to a second chance. They don’t lead to limbo. They lead to destruction.

Now, he says, “The gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.”¹⁰

Now, when you study Scripture you do not have the right to study Scripture outside of its context. Ok? For example, if you see a picture of a man like this with a shocked look on his face and his hands down to his side, but you see nothing else, that’s all you see, you don’t know what has happened to the man. Maybe he has been robbed. Maybe he just won a million dollars. You have no idea unless you know what is going on around him. You have no way of interpreting his gesture.

It is the same way with Scripture. You can’t just look at a verse and say, “Well, it means a certain thing.”

And I want to show you the way that this has been interpreted, this text, out of context. What does it say here? “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.”¹¹ Many people interpret this text in modern times this way.

Ok, here are all of us professing Christians over here who say Jesus Christ is Lord and that is the narrow way. And then over here in the broad way, of course, are all the people

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

from Hollywood, the secular people, the Atheists, all of the other religions, all of those who openly deny Jesus Christ. They are in the broad way, but those of us who profess Jesus Christ, that's us over here in the narrow way. That is the distinction that Jesus is making.

No, it is not. It is not the distinction he is making at all. What is the distinction? Ok. Look over in verse 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."¹²

Verse 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?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'¹³

He is not saying that there is this group of professing Christians over there and these are the ones that are in the narrow way and then you have got all these secular people, atheistic people, immoral people over here and they are in the broad way. No. That is not what he is teaching is this. What he is teaching is this.

"Among those who call themselves my disciples..."

He is not even talking about the world. He is not talking about the secular man. He is not talking about the Atheist. He is not talking about the irreligious. What is he talking about?

"Among those who call me Lord, the great majority are in the broad way."

That is what he is talking about. He is not even dealing with anyone else. He is dealing with those who profess him to be Lord and even emphatically. And he says, "Among those who call me Lord, the great majority are in the broad way and few are in the narrow way."

That's terrifying.

Now let's go on. Verse 14. "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."¹⁴

You have probably heard the proverb that half truth is worse than an out and out lie. Why? Because there is a part of truth in there, enough to deceive you, but partial truth will kill you like a glass of pure water with one drop of venom will kill you. A glass of

¹² Matthew 7:21

¹³ Matthew 7:22-23

¹⁴ Matthew 7:14

clean water with one drop of sewer in it will be enough for you not to want to drink it. And that is why it is more dangerous.

And what is the danger that we have today? I am Southern Baptist. Let me read this. If I were to look at the Southern Baptist Convention, if I were to look at the great majority of Baptist outside of the Convention and if I were to look at the evangelical community at large and the preaching in that evangelical community, I would have to reinterpret verse 14. I would have to say, “For the gate is small and the way is wide that leads to life and everybody who professes Jesus finds it.” Yes, I would. And I can take you to task if you disagree with me.

Look at the average Baptist, the average evangelical. We teach a half truth. We say, “Well, the gate is small...” And what does that mean? There is only one Jesus. There is only one Savior. And after you pass through that Savior, after you pass through that gate, after you supposedly accept Jesus, what about the way? It is as broad as you want it to be.

And take the lifestyle of the average Baptist member and compare it to most unbelievers and you won't see much difference.

Now here is the kicker. This is where it really gets down and people get angry. What is this way? He says, “The gate is small and the way is narrow.” Is he saying that in order to be saved we must trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and then we must walk a certain way or else we will lose our salvation? Is that what he is teaching? No.

What is he teaching? He is teaching that the evidence that you have truly come to know Jesus Christ is that you walk in the narrow way and that has been historical Baptist teaching, historical Presbyterian teaching, historical holiness Wesleyan, Methodism, whatever you want. A historical Christianity it has been this one idea, that evidence that you have truly received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, that you, indeed, are born again is that the style of your life reflects that you are walking in the narrow way.

Now, what is the narrow way? Throughout all the Old Testament, which Jesus draws upon because although many liberal theologians have a problem with it, Jesus didn't seem to have a problem with the law or anything else of the sort of truth in the Old Testament. He draws from it.

You have heard of so many times in the Old Testament walking in the way of righteousness, walking according to his commands. What does that mean? What is the narrow way? The narrow way is that way marked out by God's will revealed in Scripture. It is: How are we to live if we have been truly born again? How are we to live? According to the full counsel of God. That is how we are to live.

Now, we have to make several—we might not get through this tonight. We might have to go on with this passage tomorrow. I am not sure, unless you can stand about six hours of this. But here are some things that we need to look at.

In 1 John, John tells us clearly that one of the greatest evidences that a person has been born again is if they keep God's commands. And commandment there is a reference to just the full counsel of God, the full counsel of God. One of the great evidences that someone has truly become a Christian, that they have truly placed their faith in Jesus Christ is that they have a new relationship with the Word of God.

Sometimes someone will come up to me and they will go, "I have a new relationship with God."

And I say, "Well, do you have a new relationship with his commands? Because if you don't have a new relationship with his commands, you don't have a new relationship with him."

Or, "I have a new relationship with God."

And I say, "Do you have a new relationship with sin? Do you have a new relationship with the world? Because if you truly have a new relationship with God, you will have a new relationship with all these other things."

Ok? So the evidence that a person has been born again, one of the great ones is that they walk in this narrow path. It is a path marked out by the full counsel of God.

Now here, again, we have got to be very, very careful and I don't want to bore you with things that might not apply to you, but having to deal many times in sort of university settings and academic settings and silly liberal settings, I have to deal with a few things here that are very, very important, very important.

People who...I understand and can respect the logic of the Atheist. I mean he denies the Word of God and in the same breath denies the person of Christ, denies deity, denies the whole thing. I mean, I can understand him. I disagree with him, but I can...at least there is a bit of consistency.

What I can't understand is those who pretend to embrace Christianity, but then set themselves up as a standard to determine what part of Christianity is really Christianity instead of submitting to the very words of God.

Let's go back to Robert Schuller. His idea is, "Well, we don't speak about hell here because we just want to teach the words of Jesus."

Well, Robert, Jesus is the one who talked about hell all the time. So where is the logical consistency in that?

Another thing that I have heard often, especially among the homosexual community, debates that I have heard and things I have personally had to deal with when trying to witness and in that context. It is this.

“Oh, we just want the words of Jesus, but we don’t want to have anything to do with the apostle Paul.”

And I always say, “Well, why?”

And the answer is quite clear. And what is the answer?

“Well, because Paul contradicts our culture. That’s why. That’s the only reason. That is the only grounds is Paul contradicts our culture.” And that’s it.

You say, “Well, he went too far.”

Well, let me share something with you. Jesus called him. Jesus called Paul. He did. He told Paul, “I am going to set you out as an apostle to all the Gentiles. I am going to use you to tell the Gentiles everything I want them to know.”

We are Gentiles, most of us anyways. Ok, so that’s important.

Paul goes to Jerusalem. All the other apostles put their hands on him and say, “Man, this guy is an apostle. And the things he preaches are absolutely true.”

“Well, that was just at the beginning. Later on Paul went a little wild.”

Peter, at the end of his life what does he say? This is what he says.

And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the [and here is the important part] the rest of the Scriptures.¹⁵

He is putting all the words of Paul in his later life under the same category of the very law of God, that the Jews nearly worshipped.

So what is he talking about? He is talking about the full counsel of God. And when you approach the full counsel of God in absolutely anything you ought to be very, very afraid when you come to a part of the Word of God that you don’t agree with or your culture doesn’t agree with and therefore you just say, “That part is, well, not right.”

What has happened? You have become the judge of Scripture which means, then, if you are going to be logically consistent you have to throw out everything. You have to throw out everything and declare yourself an infidel or an Atheist. You have to. There is no other logical, consistent thing.

And don’t think that, you know, you think, well, yeah, he is up there. He is saying it.

¹⁵ 2 Peter 3:15-16

No. I have the same problem. Martin Luther who I...was an amazing sort of fellow. I don't agree with everything he did, but he was an amazing reformer. He spoke about the Word of God in this way. He said...someone talked about...said that the Word of God was our friend. He said, "My friend? The Word of God is not my friend. The Word of God is my enemy. It cuts me off on every path I want to take. It contradicts me. It fights against me. It shows me I am wrong."

Do you only like the parts of Scripture that sort of agree with you? In the name of your own culture you say you are not going to accept parts of the Bible because it is just Paul's culture?

When we talk about walking in the narrow commands it means everything and you can't take one part and leave the other. Rebellion is rebellion. And if you obey, let's say you acknowledge and seek to obey 90% of what God says. You are still a rebel. You are not submitting to Christ. You are still submitting to self. You are submitting because those are the parts you agree with. And you are not submitting to the other parts because you don't agree with it and you just determined who is Lord of your life. You are.

And here we have in Scripture where we are to bring every thought, even our thoughts, in subjection to the law of Christ.

My dear friend, you may hate me for what I am about to say and I do not want to be hated. There is so much deception going on today. And for the most part it comes from the pulpit. Pulpits all over this country who are more concerned about appeasing people, tickling their ears, making church into nothing more than a country club or a six flags over Jesus where everybody feels good about themselves instead of teaching the truth.

And I say that whether I am in front of a small congregation like yourself or 5000 people in an auditorium. It is just the truth. And Jesus said it was going to happen and Paul said it was going to happen and it has happened. Radical discipleship, radical submission to the person of Jesus Christ that could cost you your life and now Jesus Christ is preached so that it doesn't even have to cramp your lifestyle or contradict your culture.

We need to be afraid.

Now, let's look. Verse 15. "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."¹⁶

False prophets. Do you know that something that is amazing about false prophets? They never make anybody mad. Why is that? Well, because you just are not going to make a whole lot of money making people mad. You are not going to have an easy life making people mad and you are not going to be esteemed by all men and all men are not going to speak well of you if you make people mad. But those are the very things Jesus said.

¹⁶ Matthew 7:15

He said if the world speaks well of you, you are in trouble.

I don't know where you are from. I don't know anything about your life, but let me ask you a question. Does your church ever get in trouble with the culture around it? Does the culture around your church ever attack your church? Are you ever referred to as fanatical? Are you ever maligned? Are you ever persecuted? Or is everyone pretty much ok with you and your church.

Jesus said, "Be afraid."

If your church just fits in with culture, society and everything else, you are probably not in the Church. And if your lifestyle is just all right with an ungodly, immoral culture that even secular historians are calling a disgrace, you are in trouble.

There is one thing about false prophets. The fastest growing churches in America, just about, there are some exceptions and I have been in some of them. I would say if they had one thing in common it was this and I have heard their pastors say this very thing. They don't preach on sin.

Why did Jesus die? For sin. Why did men hate him? Because he looked at them and said, "You will not come to me because I am the light and your deeds are evil."

You see, my dear friend, cultural Christianity is that warm, lukewarm stuff that Jesus said he will one day spit out of his mouth. But the false prophets will keep you happy. They will tell you stories. And more than that they will get you involved and they will get you active and they will entertain and they will do all sorts of things so that you not think about the deep abiding, eternal truths that will determine your destiny. They will do everything. It is just there is very little difference between church and a social organization or a social group or a place you go to meet friends to hear a nice little moral story. No different than someone who is a motivational speaker.

But that is not Christianity. That is not why Jesus was crucified. That is not why Peter was crucified upside down. That is not why Paul possibly lost his head and even before that was stoned several times. That is not why John was put on the Isle of Patmos. That is not why 50 million Christians have died in the last 2000 years. That is not the reason why 1000 Christians a day are being martyred, America. But for the false prophet who just wants you to have your best life now. It's a different story. Beware.

An old preacher told me one time—and he was right. He said, "Boy..." When I was a kid you could say that. He said, "Boy, just remember this. Your best friend is the one who tells you the most truth."

My wife is not from this country and when she came here she said the thing that most amazed her, most astounded her other than the deacons smoking in the front door of the church, the second thing that astounded her was...do you know when she came here? She said she saw all these men out there smoking in front of the church, she said, "Man, this

is a great church. I want to be a member of it. They have got such an outreach program they have got all these lost people here.” And then all of them were presented as deacons in the Sunday morning service.

But she said the most amazing thing to her has been how thin skinned Christians are in America. She said you can’t even look at somebody the wrong way here and they take offense. They take offense at everything. She said, “They do not need to come to South America and sit under the authority of a pastor there. They would no offense.”

To have a pastor come to your home in South America and say, “I have been watching your child. Two years ago he made the good profession of faith, but recently I have been seeing the way he comes to church. I have been seeing the way he sits. I have been seeing his attitude and the way he dresses and everything else and he seems to be a total departure from the commands of Scripture. I think you need to worry about the soul of your child that possibly is lost. May I speak with him?”

And if the pastor doesn’t shake your hand, you are upset. If one little word even looks towards you the wrong way, you are out of here. Be very careful. Maybe your ears are more suited for a false prophet than a true one.

Now you know why I preach in a lot of Baptist churches once.

Verse 16 applies directly to false prophets, but here is a principle that applies in the wider context to all the unconverted who would profess themselves to be Christians when they are not. “You will know them by their fruits.”¹⁷

Now, if you go over to verse 20, that is the beginning—in the verse we just read in verse 16—is the beginning of the argument he is going to put forth. And in the end of it, 20, he says, “So then, you will know them by their fruits.”¹⁸

Do you think he is trying to tell us something? What is he trying to tell us? He is trying to tell us, “You will know whether or not you are a Christian or someone else is a Christian by the fruits that you bear.”

“You can’t judge a book by its cover,” did not come from Jesus.

Usually when I am preaching this I have had people even say, “Judge not, lest ye be judged.”¹⁹

And I always say, “Twist not Scripture, lest ye be like the devil,” because that is exactly what you are doing.

¹⁷ Matthew 7:16

¹⁸ Matthew 7:20

¹⁹ See Matthew 7:1

When Jesus said, “Judge not, lest ye be judged,”²⁰ he was not talking about that at all. The thing that you are using it for is not what he was saying. What he was talking about was a group of Pharisaical religious leaders who tore each other apart in their hatred and jealousy and desire for ambition and position because the same Jesus said, “Listen, when people come to you telling you they are Christians, you will know whether or not they are by the way they live.”

Now that is what he said. Look at it.

Like the young reporter came to me one time and said, “I don’t agree with your interpretation of this text.”

I said, “Son, I read the text. I didn’t preach it. That text you are mentioning. I just read it.”

“You will know them by their fruits.”²¹ There is no interpretation there. You will know them by what they bear. You will know them.

We have become so I don’t know what you would call it. We insulate ourselves with superficialities is possibly the best way to say it. I don’t know. But this super spiritual idea, “Well, you can’t know what is in my heart.”

And the answer would be, “I don’t have to know what is in your heart. I just have to look at your life.”

The other day...I was in Peru a few weeks ago and I had to rebuke a man, a pastor, actually, for a thing that he said against an elder pastor to his face. And in Peru a pastor is very highly respected, more so than here. And he said something in a way that you would never speak to an elder pastor. And the man responded. He said, “Yes, brother Paul, I have got a problem with my mouth.”

I said, “You don’t have a problem with your mouth. You have a problem with your heart because your heart is revealed by what comes out of your mouth.”

In the same way your heart, you don’t just wear it on your sleeve. You are dressed in it. Everything you do is a revelation of what is inside.

Is Christ revealed in your life?

“You will know them by their fruits.”²²

And he goes on. He says, “Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?”²³ Now, I think you have probably heard me do this before. I do this

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Matthew 7:16

²² Ibid.

quite often. People tend to get a kick out of it, but Jesus when he taught he was a rabbi and he taught seated. Usually they sat like this and would talk for hours.

Imagine. Jesus was like the personification of the book of Proverbs. You did not want to get in a debate with this man. He would not only crush you, he would trap you. Jesus would weave such a net, such a trap that before you knew it you were enclosed in it and you could not escape.

“Whose image is on this coin?”²⁴

And Jesus sits there and he goes, “Grapes. You are not going to find grapes on thorn bushes, are you?”

And you can just hear somebody say, “Well, of course not, Jesus. You are a carpenter, not a farmer. But everybody knows that.”

“Oh, well, then thorns. You are not going to find them on something that truly bears grapes, are you?”

“Of course not, Jesus. If anybody comes to you and tells you they have got a grape vine and it has got thorns on it, you reject that, Jesus, because that is...that is either a lie or the person is absurd. They don't know what they are talking about. Jesus, you are never going to find thorns on a grape vine or grapes on a thorn tree, never, Jesus. It is impossible. It is an absurdity.”

And Jesus looks at them, “In the same way you call yourself my disciple and you do not bear the fruit of a disciple. It is an absurdity. It is a lie.”

It is like, you know, I am going down the road and I arrive here late. I come in. My hair barely combed. That is about as combed as it gets. My shoes, everything just seems kind of normal. The pastor is put out. You are put out. I arrive a half an hour late. Everybody says, “What don't you want to preach here? Don't you consider it a privilege to be here? Why haven't you come on time?”

I say, “Listen. Don't judge me. I was out in my car and I had a flat tire and I was changing the tire and the lug nut rolled out into the middle of the highway and when I went out there to pick the lug nut up I wasn't thinking. When I stood up there was a 30 ton logging truck going 120 miles an hour and it was like five feet in front of me and it ran me over and that is why I arrived here late.”

They look at me, “It's impossible.”

I go, “What do you mean it is impossible? That's what really...”

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See Luke 20:24

“No, it is impossible. You are either a liar or you are out of your cotton picking mind, but that is impossible.”

I say, “What is impossible.”

“You cannot have an encounter with a logging truck that’s 30 tons going 120 miles an hour and walk in here unchanged.”

“Then why do you tell me you have had an encounter with God and you are not changed?”

Has God become weaker than a logging truck?

If you have not been changed, you have not had an encounter with God. And if you are not continuing to change, whatever encounter you thought you had was not with God because he who began a good work in you will finish it.²⁵ That is what he promises.

Is that a reality in your life?

I am not talking just about correct theology. I am talking about experimental religion. I am talking about the evidence that God is working in your life.

What kind of fruit do you bear? What kind of fruit do you bear?

It goes on. Now we are going to get into some of the deepest theology with regard...some of the deepest doctrine of Soteriology is found in this passage. It is incredible, very, very overlooked in modern times, but just wonderful.

And he goes in verse 17, “So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.”²⁶

What is he saying? “Just look at the fruit. If the fruit is bad, the tree is bad.”

Now what is the tree? He is talking about the essence, the nature. So what is he saying? Well, fruit is always the litmus test of the nature of the thing.

If you have bad fruit, it is a bad tree. If you have good fruit, it is a good tree. That is just the way it works. It is the same way with a man. It doesn’t matter what a man professes. As John MacArthur, I have heard him say, “Your profession of faith in Jesus Christ is absolutely worthless because your profession of faith means nothing.”

The question is: Your fruit. If your fruit is bad it is because your nature is bad and if your nature is bad it is because you are unconverted and if you are unconverted, you don’t

²⁵ See Philippians 1:6

²⁶ Matthew 7:13

know Jesus. If your fruit is good it means your nature is good and if your nature is good it is because you have been converted, regenerated through Jesus.

So don't trust in what most pastors, not this one here, but what most pastors to trust in, some superstitious prayer that one time you repeated and therefore you are in as though it were some sort of flu shot.

Salvation is through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and it happens in a moment. You go in a moment from being unregenerated to being to being regenerated. But that work of the Holy Spirit continues on all the days of your life.

People who say, "Oh, I repented."

I always tell them, "If you are not repenting today, you didn't repent back then."

"I believed."

If you are not still believing, you didn't believe.

Jesus Christ is not like a vaccination or a flu shot. He is not something you got and then that is enough. It is something you got and get and continue to get in greater abundance until the day you step over into glory because he who began a good work in you will finish it.²⁷

²⁷ Philippians 1:6