

APPEAL TO OBEDIENCE

Intro: In Jesus' closing words of the Sermon on the Mount the issue has been clearly set. The issue is righteousness. Jesus begins by showing how true righteousness will bring the blessings of God. Then in the body of the sermon he works out the theme announced in 5:20: "Except righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees you cannot enter the kingdom". Then in point by point fashion Jesus exercises his authority as the Messiah in pointing to the true righteousness embodied in the law of God, showing how the Pharisees in emphasizing the letter of the law missed or neglected its spirit. Then in chapter 6 Jesus spoke of two other challenges to righteousness, hypocrisy and materialism, showing the need for transparent sincerity in all we do and faith in God that invests in heaven rather than earth and that trusts God to provide our needs. Finally in chapter 7 he explores the way we deal with others, avoiding the tendency to be judgmental on the one hand, he urges us to be discriminating with the gospel on the other hand. And in a summary exhortation gives us a rule that will determine the proper course in every situation with our neighbor--The golden rule!

Such righteousness is not of ourselves but of God who works this righteousness in us by the Holy Spirit as we keep asking, seeking, and knocking. And having presented the exalted standard and having told his hearers how to attain it, he concludes with a stirring list of contrasts: Two gates, two roads, two destinations, two trees, two fruits, two claims, two houses! As he presses these points home he intends that each of us see life in simple absolutes. We either love and obey God or we do not! We are either saved or lost!

Now having pointed out the barriers of false teachers, Jesus in a final stroke urges his hearers to constant and complete obedience, to enter and remain in the strait and narrow way! Read v. 21ff. Here is the Lord's appeal to obedience, radical and sincere obedience!

I. FALSE DISCIPLES

A. v. 21-23 might be thought of as another barrier to heaven created by Satan. They are not false prophets who knowingly seek to fleece God's sheep, but rather self-deluded and false disciples who imagine they belong to the Lord when they do not!

1. Who among us has not been troubled by the throng of seemingly honest men and women who with sometimes superior zeal pursue their faith with the full expectation of heaven?
2. One wonders do I not need to do as they do? Can that many people be lost? Such people may become barriers to heaven for those who put too much faith in men and what they do rather than in the word.

B. Jesus shows us that there are those who profess discipleship who are not really disciples.

1. "Lord, Lord" conveys the idea of a servant seeking the instruction of the Master; yet the life that attends the claim is not in keeping with the terminology.
 2. These people are apparent "miracle" workers. The concept behind the three words "prophesy, cast out demons, perform wonderful works" is the suggestion of miraculous deeds, stupendous deeds.
 3. Yet on the judgment they are rejected by the Lord as workers of iniquity! "anomos" (without law). These acts though seemingly stupendous and successful are regarded by the Lord merely as acts of iniquity because they do not issue from His authority!
 4. Therefore, the Lord says I do not know who you are! Depart from me! Here is the realization of spiritual death! 2 Thes. 1:7-9
- C. What matters is doing the will of the Father in heaven. 7:21*

II. TWO HOUSES

A. From a child many of us have known the little hand song about the wise and the foolish man. But its message is very grown up! And perhaps we take it for granted.

1. Imagine two houses! Both nicely built and decorated. One hardly imagines any difference in them. There is just one important distinction! One is built upon rock, the other on sand. The storms come and wash the foundation from under the house built on sand and a tremendous collapse occurs! So said Jesus are all those who hear his sayings and do not do them! They are headed for destruction.

2. In contrast those who hear and obey the teachings of Christ build upon a foundation that will endure the storms of judgment!

B. The wise man is the obedient man!

III. APPLICATION

A. All of us are headed to the judgment seat of Christ. "That day" is the judgment day. Though we will have known our eternal sentence, the judgment vindicates God's sentence. This passage serves as a good example of that! There are only two destinations. This sermon makes it clear that heaven and hell are real. Furthermore, our decision concerning these things is the ultimate decision of life! The gospel affects the earthly life of the follower of Christ, but his message is given in view of eternity!

B. Calling Jesus "Lord" is not enough. That is not intended so much as an indictment of neglect as a proof of iniquity! It is self-evident that those who do nothing right will not go to heaven, but what of those who sincerely do many good things? If unauthorized "miracles" could not please God how much more any lesser effort to help God out! Everything done in the name of Christ is not authorized by Him or truly honors the Father. Every Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal needs to ponder this! And every denominationalist or even brother in Christ who seeks to honor God by

adding to His word ought to seriously think about this. Jesus says "many" will be surprised!

C. Faith in Jesus as Christ is essential. The challenge to obedience is tantamount to a claim of Messiahship! Throughout this sermon Jesus has emphasized his authority to truly interpret the law of God. "I say", cf. 7:28. But now, he makes the law of God and His sayings one entity! The righteousness to which the law pointed is embodied in the teaching of Christ. What man could say, "If you refuse to obey me, you are a fool!" Jesus could say that because He is no man! His demand upon our lives is itself a claim of Messiahship!

D. Faith in Christ is inseparable from obedience to his will! Religionists today who piously talk of believing Christ while refusing baptism or the Lord's supper, as if these were trifling options, do not truly believe! And those who, however well intentioned, substitute their own way for God's way do not believe--whether its substituting mechanical music for songs in the heart, or sprinkling for baptism, or church hierarchy for congregational independence. There are many people today who sell cheap grace.

Carson's quote:

Conclusion: Finally, I will tell you where I believe the Sermon on the Mount leads us. It does not advocate salvation by human merit! We are not urged to obey God in order to achieve merit points for heaven (Eph. 2:8-9). The demands of God are far too lofty for any of us to contemplate that possibility! These words are intended first to bring us to the dust in humility, to poverty of spirit, the first of the kingdom norms! And in that spirit of unworthiness cast our souls upon a merciful God who gave his son to die for us! (There's the faith and gift of Eph. 2:9) And then to look to Him for help and assistance to live as he would have us live! (There is Eph. 2:10) This sermon was designed to lead men and women to become Christians! Thus, invitation!