

Teach -In No. 5 The Gospel of Matthew

We saw in chapter 6 that we should not be anxious or fearful about anything but to seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness. What this means for us is to put our trust in God for all things and to live lives that are in accordance with His teachings. Chapter 7 of Matthew's gospel covers our attitudes towards one another, especially with regard to judging. It also includes praying and how our attitudes determine whether our prayers are answered or not and how difficult the lifestyle is for the natural man. Furthermore it speaks of the narrow gate that we are to walk through but we can only do this in the power of the Holy Spirit. It concludes by telling us how to examine the words and the life of other believers and the importance of knowing Christ and walking in His footsteps.

Matthew 7 v 1-5

"Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

What Jesus is saying here reflected in Paul's letter to the Roman church.

Romans 2 v 1-3

Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

We do not have the right to pass judgement on one another because we are no different to the one that we have judged! Paul says that we practice the very thing that we judge others for. This means that we have to adopt Jesus' way of life. He hated the sin but loved the sinner. What we do is show no mercy towards those who sin, we hold their iniquity against them and this destroys the relationship with that person and, more significantly it destroys our relationship with God. Jesus had to speak to Peter about this in John's Gospel.

John 21 v 22

Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" He more or less told him to mind his own business! The lesson in this is obvious, it is easy to find fault with others. Do not judge others or you will be disciplined by the Lord. Be perfect in all things, and then when we are we may be in a position to judge! What we are allowed to do is to be a fruit inspector. We will expand on this later in this teach-in.

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Matthew 7 v 6

"Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces..."

This is an interesting statement. The experienced fisherman examines the stretch of river prior to casting in his bait, he doesn't want to waste his time waiting for the fish to bite, he tries to read the signs first, then when he feels the time is right, he casts his worms, maggots or bread knowing that it is only a matter of time before the fish bite. If we are to be fishers of men, then we also need to be able to discern matters to avoid *casting our pearls* before men who are not hungry to hear God's word of salvation. If we don't detect or fruit inspect the person we may find ourselves in an argument that leads to a place of dis-ease. Jesus talks about this later in Matthew's gospel.

Matthew 10 v 34-39

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

The next part of Matthew 7 is an encouragement to pray and includes some principles of how we should pray.

Matthew 7 v 7-12

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Consequently I have concluded that true prayer is asking and receiving, seeking and finding and knocking and opening. Why do I say this? Jesus does not lie, God's written word does not lie, and the Holy Spirit cannot lie! There are, however special ingredients needed for our prayers to be answered, just as there are special ingredients for good relationships and even for good cakes! Here are some of them:

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1. Knowing that God hears our prayers.

Matthew 6 v 7-8

"And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Mark 11 v 23-24

Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.

John 11 v 41-42

So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me."

2. Being expectant.

Hebrews 11 v 6

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

James 1 v 5-8

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

3. Being all - forgiving.

Matthew 6 v 14

For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Mark 11 v 25-26

Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. [But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.]"

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1 Peter 3 v 7

You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

4. Know your heavenly Father's heart.

1 John 5 v 13-15

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

The next part of this study entails a hard task for us.

Matthew 7 v 13-15

"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.

The narrow gate indicates a hard path to take; it is so easy to follow the crowd. AW Tozer wrote in *The Pursuit of God* of the danger of following the popular vogue (or fashion) those who do so may find that they were led astray. The narrow way is the Jesus way. He is the doorway through which we enter and it is a difficult way.

Matthew 19 v 23-26

And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Returning to Jesus' words in Matthew 7 v 15 where He tells us that there are few who find the gate; we have already found it, but will we walk through it? To me it means that I make my life accountable to God, I enjoy a Holy Spirit given individuality that keeps me connected to the rest of the Body of Christ.

The next few verses warn me of the dangers of believing everything that I hear, I shouldn't do this; I must check things out to see whether they conform to the word of God, its called discernment.

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Matthew 7 v 15-20

"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? "Even 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.

We now come to a very important principle, although to judge another is prohibited, I am almost compelled to discern the spirit of what I hear and see. A fruit inspector only examines the fruit; the one who judges tends to take the axe to the tree! The one who sets himself up to be a judge may lose the relationship with the one that they judge.

1 John 4 v 1-6

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

False prophets, like counterfeit £10 notes are not easy to spot! We are free to examine the fruit of a person's life as well as their spirit but not to pass judgement on our fellow believers.

Matthew 16 v 17

And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Jesus is our best example of this, when Simon- Peter was commended for his discernment of who Jesus was. And yet just a few verses later he got it all wrong.

Matthew 16 v 22-23

Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

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Jesus addresses the spirit of satan that had influenced Peter; there was evidence of both the Holy Spirit and the unholy spirit in him. As you would expect, the fruits of the Holy Spirit are quite different from the fruits of the unholy spirit. We can use the following scriptures to compare these fruits.

Galatians 5 v 22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self - control; against such things there is no law

Galatians 5 v 19-21

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing , and things like these, of which I forewarned you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

This is our own personalised checklist. My own attitudes are easily discerned and I know the source of my own responses.

Matthew 7 v 21 -23

"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.'

The foregoing speaks of the dangers of knowing about Christ and yet not knowing Him in reality. Jesus knows those who belong to Him and if we are His, then He will from time to time instruct us as part of His discipling. Those individuals who resist His teachings or fail to do what He asks them to do will finish up as part of the apostate church of the anti-Christ.

Finally, we come to the two foundations upon which we may choose to build our lives, the rock or the sand.

Matthew 7 v 24-27

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

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The contrast between the two is quite alarming, the house built on sand had to fail and fall. Jesus' teachings were received with amazement, not just because of their wisdom but because he spoke with such authority. Jesus desires that His word has authority over every believer's life.

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