

XXXIV. Matthew in Biblical Perspective
A Royal Manifesto of the Kingdom from the King
“Life Choice #3: Firm Foundation or Faulty Foundation?”

Matthew 7:21-27

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November 14, 2010 – Morning Sermon

This is the next to the last study on the Sermon on the Mount. We have one more we will do on the next Lord’s Day for communion. Don’t forget to prepare for communion. Let’s look at our text for this study in Matthew 7:21-27 which says **21** “*Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you (literally, never have I known you); depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ 24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”* The grass withers and the flower fades. This is God’s Word. It abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

This last week I had a flash back. As many of you know I have had the privilege to serve in three congregations – one in Miami, one in Charlotte, and now here in Birmingham. Not far from where I lived came a news report that grabbed my attention and I imagine it might have grabbed yours. A house caught on fire through a faulty electric heater and the neighbor next door became aware of the fire and at the risk of her life she beat down the door. She went in and pulled out the first person she could find which was the mother and then went back and could not get in. She kept beating as much as she could to awaken all that were in there to try to get them out but they did not get out. The angst of this woman in the interview was clear as she was weeping that her neighbors and those around her had perished in this fire. She had only seen one rescued and it just literally ripped her heart to pieces.

As I looked at our text today and couldn’t help but think that’s exactly where Jesus is as those thousands who had gathered around Him to hear that Sermon on the Mount. He is at the concluding part of that sermon. It’s the one that probably takes the most time for a preacher in preparation of a sermon – how do you bring it to a conclusion so that which has been spoken and expounded is brought to the heart for the change of life. Jesus has labored on this by bringing three life choices. He has developed this marvelous statement of the power of the Gospel. The beatitudes changes lives. It calls us to a ministry of salt and light. It is a lifestyle change in which the law of God brings us to Christ, becomes a directive as to how we live for Christ but we go far beyond the law because it has no power. We take the Gospel into lives.

Here is the way I’ve tried to put it. Jesus has said that when He changes a man/woman and saves a man/woman they become attracted to sinners to save them and

they become repulsed by sin. In our life when God saves us by grace there's a repulsiveness to sin that we want to flee and there is an attraction to sinners to bring them to Christ. So that we turn our cheeks, we give our cloaks, we go the second mile and do all of those things with those who would use and abuse us and those who are even rebelling against God because we are attracted to them. That's where we were and Christ came for us through others so now Christ is going through us into the lives of others. But you will not be repulsed by sin and flee it with repentance to obedience to Christ and you will not be attracted to save sinners unless God's grace has come to your life. So He has brought to us life choices.

He has put before us two gates, two ways and two destinations. There is narrow gate which is Christ. There is a hard way following Christ and its destination is life. There's a wide gate. It's any religion, any ism or anything else. It's a wide gate and you can have your designer religion. It's an easy way and a lot of people are on it, but the way's end is death and destruction.

He has brought another life choice. He says if you go to that gate and that way you need to hear Me and I've sent true prophets who will speak the truth in love. They won't hold back but in love they will always hold you up, speaking the truth in love. AS they speak the truth in love that's another choice. Am I going to take the prophets and speakers of the Word of God because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, and lay hold of that in my life that I may be brought to Christ, instructed in and for Christ or am I going to take false shepherds who tickle my ears, say what I want them to, give me just a little bit of religion, feel better, get my happy hour on Sunday, move back out into this world but no life change at all is necessary and I'll have a tree that bears bad fruit? The fruit will reveal that there's no root and one of the reasons there is no root is because I'm not choosing those who would bring me to know about Him, who changes me that I might have my root in Christ and bear fruit for Christ.

Now Jesus is like the woman at the house beating on the door more intensely because now He gives us His last life choice as He brings us to the edge of eternity. You are all headed to eternity. It's appointed unto man once to die and then the judgment. Jesus has brought us to that point. One time I was sitting listening to a sermon as a child and the preacher said "When we get to heaven and meet those who are in heaven there will be some people that surprise you that they're in heaven, saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone." I know what he was saying and I'm sure that's going to be true but if I hear the words of Jesus right when I get to heaven I'm going to look around for some that I thought would be there and they won't be there. It's not just a few because the text says "Many, many..." Not only did I think they would be there but they are going to think they would be there.

Matthew 7:22-23 says **22** *On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23* *And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you (literally, never have I known you); depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'* We are going to be studying this tonight in our study on the Doctrine of Eternity and where will they depart? It will be to a place called hell that's inescapable and inevitable. Any why, I never knew you, how do you know I never knew you? It's because they were workers of lawlessness.

Do you see how He has circled back around? You have listened to false prophets and there's no fruit. I'll show you that there was no fruit and I'll show you that there was no root. Do you remember the narrow way in life and the wide gate which is the easy way? Now we have circled all the way around to its end which is eternal judgment and separation from the presence of God. Everybody I have talked to today is headed to that moment. Jesus has peeled back time for us and He has brought us to the edge of eternity at a place called the Judgment Seat. He has made it very clear that there are only two groups in that day – sheep and goats. There will be those who know Him demonstrated with a changed life and those who don't know Him and that is proven by the fact that in their life they were workers of lawlessness instead of followers of Christ.

Let's look at this text that has a command and we've already covered what Jesus has done for us in this Sermon on the Mount. He has brought us to a Christ centered, gospel driven and Spirit filled gospel life which rejects sin and pursues godliness, while simultaneously being attracted to sinners and attracting sinners to our Savior which will be revealed and affirmed in the adversity of life and ultimately at the Day of Judgment. In the inevitable adversities of life you begin to find out where the roots and foundations are in your life. At the Day of Judgment Jesus will publicly affirm those who are His and those that He never knew. So here is this text that brings us to this command and what is this command? What is it that He is commanding us to be and to do in Matthew 7:21-27?

He is clearly saying that there are many on the last day who will have the right words – the talk – but absent will be the walk. They will have the talk but they will not have the walk. The talk does not affirm a relationship with Christ. They can say the right things but their life revealed that what they are able to say publicly, yet in fact, they rejected personally and the life became the example. In other words He is saying there are many who will hear but there will not be many that do. The doing does not save you. Christ saves you but who has been saved by Christ? They are not just talkers, they are walkers. They are not just hearers, they are doers. Will they be perfect doers? No. We are not talking about works that merit salvation but we are talking about the works in the life of those that inevitably manifest the reality of salvation. The life we live is one that is manifested from the kind of foundation it has.

So He gives us two builders. One builds on sand and one builds on the rock. So what do you think the rock is? It is Jesus. He's the Rock. Here's the sand. What's the sand? It is anything else – religion, non-religion, nominal Christianity, occult, any ism. One might think, "Harry, I'm sincere in what I believe." I'm not questioning sincerity but you can believe what's wrong sincerely and you'll be sincerely wrong. Jesus said "This is the Rock. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man comes to the Father but through Me." So you build your life on the Rock or you build your life on the sand. Almost everybody that preaches this believes the choice is what the foundation of your life is. What is the foundation of your life? Here is the choice. He has given you a command. It's not just talkers, it's walkers that are saved. It's not just hearers, it's doers that are saved. It's not your doing and walking that saves you. Christ saves you.

Why is it that 'many, many...' are cast away in this picture in the text? They are cast away not because they didn't say the right thing, "Lord, Lord..." and not because they hadn't been religious, in fact they had been engaged in a lot of religion with seeming works of power, casting out demons, miracles and everything. The Egyptian magicians did miracles. The Bible warns you that in the last days there will be those who do works

of power. This is something added here. I hadn't planned on giving you this but let me talk about us for a minute. We go out and want to experience God so that we will know His Word. Our forefathers understood this. I want to know His Word so I know what experiences are of God. We go out and get our experiences and then build our theology from that. I have experienced this so I believe that. Our forefathers said "No, teach me the Word so that I can know what experiences are from God and how I live them from God." Here are people who had all kinds of experiences and were even able to say right things but the problem was they didn't know Jesus personally. Their problem wasn't that they didn't have a religion because they did have religion.

Did Satan appear like an angel of light? Absolutely. He occupies a lot of pulpits this morning. Can Satan do seeming works of power? Absolutely. If I was to give Satan a theological exam do you think he could pass it? Yes, he could get the talk and he could get involved in religion. In fact, he loves religion. It's one of the greatest things to distract people away from a personal relationship with Christ. So here are these people that were religious but what was the ultimate problem? It wasn't that they didn't have religion or say the right thing but the problem was Jesus said "I never knew you because you had no relationship with Me." How do you know there is no relationship with Him? It is because you were workers of lawlessness. Your life revealed no relationship that was established with Me. It wasn't your works that save you but your works revealed whether you were saved or not.

That's why every time Jesus takes us to a Judgment Seat and He gives us a picture of what's going on there is always an evaluation of people's lives, not to see if you're good enough to get to heaven but to declare 'here's a saved man.' The grace of God that changed his position changed that man's life and the evidence is "if any man be in Christ he is a new creation. The old has passed away, the new has come." There will be evidence. When the boat of salvation hits, there will be a wake of a changed life behind it. When the steps of grace come there will be footprints of a changed life behind it. So He says what's your problem? I never knew you. What's the evidence? You are workers of lawlessness.

So what is my root and what is my foundation? You either have the foundation of the rock in which the house stands or you have the foundation of sand in which it's destroyed. So is the choice that is being pressed upon me, what's the foundation? No, that's obviously an intention because you have to have the right foundation but what He is pressing upon you is, what kind of builder are you? Are you a wise builder or a foolish builder? Foolish builders build on sand. What is building on sand? They only hear. They don't submit. What does it mean to build on the rock? It is to hear and do.

I want to look more closely at that last part in Matthew 7 where Jesus talks about the difference between the foolish and the wise builder. Matthew 7:24-27 says **24** "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (How did it get on the rock? They heard and did.) **25** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. **26** And everyone who hears these words of mine (notice the foolish man showed up for preaching, reads the Bible, traffics in religion) and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. **27** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

So my question today being faithful on behalf of what my Savior put here over 2,000 years ago is simply, what's the foundation of your life? It is either the rock, Jesus, where you have by faith put your trust in Him, with repentance being committed to follow Him. You have turned from yourself to follow Him. So the question for anyone here is not, have you heard? The question is, have you submitted and surrendered? Your life will tell it. It won't be a perfect life but there will be a changed life. There will be a life of endurance and perseverance. There will be a life that stands the test of a sinful era, an age, and a life that stands in the Day of Judgment because your life revealed that Christ was your Rock and you knew Him.

I have one takeaway but three applications to it. Jesus is bringing this home. He is knocking on the door and He is beating on it. Your house by the way is dissipating. Sooner or later you are going to face adversity in life and you will face a Day of Judgment. Jesus is beating on the door and asking you "Where is your foundation? Have you come to Me and is there the evidence that you have come to Me? Is it true in your life? I'm not asking you if you have been baptized or if you're religious or if you go around and hold preaching services. I'm not even asking you if you can do exorcisms but I am asking you, have you heard My Word and submitted and surrendered to Me and dug deep to build your life on Me?" Those will be those who Christ knows. Those are the people who are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone because grace and faith are never alone. They leave tracks. So He is driving that question.

The takeaway is who is saved? Here is what He is saying. This is the first application. The reality of a true saving relationship with Christ is not determined by verbal affirmations and religious involvement but it is revealed in following Christ by faith and repentance with full obedience. One might think "Harry are you saying a Christian has to be perfect?" No, I am saying a Christian comes to follow Jesus with full obedience. Do I know what that full obedience looks like yet? No. From the day I took my first breath I got closer to my last breath. When I take my last breath I'm going to be standing at that Judgment Seat and so will you. I've only got one hope in that Day and that is that I have surrendered to Christ. If I have surrendered to Christ then in that Judgment Day it will not reveal a perfect man but it will reveal a changed man. It's not a changed man because I'm able to say religious words. I can do that. I have passed the PCA presbytery exams but my guess is that Satan probably could have passed the exam better than me.

The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "*But I discipline (beat) my body and keep it under control (make it my slave), lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified (a castaway).*" The fact that I'm ordained does not make me a Christian. It's not that I'm religiously involved and verbally say the right things but it's by God's grace, faith and repentance, that I put my trust in Christ alone and what He did for me and then surrender to Him and the surrender is non-negotiable. It is unconditional surrender with full obedience. It's not Jesus I'm going to come to You but my family is mine, so is my job, my play time, and my computer. No, when you come to Jesus Christ you surrender to the Savior as Lord and Jesus doesn't negotiate. He calls for a full surrender.

So God is calling us here that if we're building upon the rock, the question isn't is there a rock or do you and I have a foundation but the question is what is our foundation and our foundation is determined by our building. Have we dug down so that Christ

alone is our Rock and we've surrendered to Him? That's who is saved. Those whose names are in the Book of Life will be the evidence that they have surrendered to Christ.

Secondly, who is saved? It will be revealed in life. In a sin broken world adversity is inevitable and therefore will ultimately reveal the integrity of our relationship with Christ. The rains will come, the winds will blow. You are going to lose loved ones. They will die. You will have children that die. You will have parents that die. You will lose your job. There will be people who abandon you. You will have people that will give to you that will turn from you. You will have people who are friends who will manifest themselves as your enemies. You will have gossipers who speak about you. You will have slanderers who will say things about you. You live in a sin broken world and you don't get a pass beyond it but Jesus does make you an over comer.

One of my favorite songs when I jog is a David Phelps song where he says "No more night, no more pain, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more death" and it's a song on the glories of heaven. I love that passage in Revelation. I love to hear it and all that it talks about because I know when I get to heaven there won't be any consequences of sin. There will be no more pain, no tears, no sorrow, no ability to sin, no accountability group, no crucifying the old man, no fleeing temptation and no more death. That's where I'm headed but that's not where I am now. The reason He tells me about where I'm headed is to remind me also of where I am now in which there is a lot of pain. There is a lot of adversity.

When adversity come the religious person will go die in a pile but the person who knows Christ will be honest about their grief. They won't try to cover it up callously but they'll be honest about it and it doesn't defeat them. In that day the house stands, in that day they finish, in that day they go to the end, in that day they fix their eyes on Jesus, in that day they declare Christ is enough, in that day of adversity the integrity of our relationship with Christ will stand. There is nobody out here in Birmingham that is going to come to Jesus Christ because you believe in Jesus and got a Mercedes through it. People think that if they believe in Jesus they will get healed every time they get sick. No, that is not going to happen. What faith healer should I listen to? You don't want to ask me that question. If you can find a faith healer that's 150 years old then listen to them.

The fact that you have come to Jesus does not mean no sickness, no adversity, no disappointments, no challenges, or no failures. The fact that you come to Jesus is that He will hold you and nothing can separate you from the love of Christ neither death, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword. You can go right up to the place where you have to die for this Christ and you're received into glory and He'll be with you. The foundation will hold and the anchor will hold. So my question is not, what's the foundation, my question is, what's your foundation? My question about your foundation is, have you dug down and not only heard about it but have you surrendered to it with no negotiations?

Thirdly, is who is saved? It's not only revealed in life but it will be affirmed by Christ in the Day of Judgment. In the Day of Judgment Christ will affirm His own by who are marked not by words and religion but by a non-negotiated obedience to Him as Lord and Savior. I love the words of C.S. Lewis. I can't remember the exact place I read this but boy did it strike me. I identify with C.S. Lewis not because of intelligence because had amazing intelligence but his love for Jesus just draws me. His desire to

explain the glories of Christ to the skeptic and the unbeliever excites me and there's so much about him I love and that's why I love to read his works. I want to share with you something he said. He used to hate it when he would be lying in bed at night and get a toothache because he knew what he needed to do when he got the toothache. He would call for Mama but he didn't want to call her. I did want to call her because with her being there I'd feel better and she'd bring an aspirin which would help my toothache but I didn't want to call her because I knew she would also go make an appointment at the dentist and that's where I didn't want to go. That dentist wasn't going to quit until he got my teeth right.

Many of us want to call Jesus for the aspirin but when you call on Jesus He doesn't quit. He gets your life right. He doesn't quit until He gets your life right. He uses adversity. He uses prosperity. He uses all of those things but He doesn't quit until He gets your life right. Because of my call of Christ and my love of you, this is why I take the time to put some application or life takeaways in because the reason I get there is because I know the Day of Judgment you don't pass by there because you heard Bible preaching and you can recite my outlines and doctrines I shared with you from God's Word. I know it's a changed life of people who have heard the Word, dug down and surrendered to Christ. He changes your life. He doesn't say go change your life and then come to Me. When do you clean fish? You don't clean them before you catch them. He says you come and then I'll clean you and there are no negotiations. I'm not going to quit until I've gone to every nook and cranny of your life. I didn't call you only to be forgiven of your sins, praise His Name, but I called you to hate your sins and love Me. If you love Me you will keep My commandments.

I was reading something in my preparation for tonight's sermon and I even shared a little bit of it last Sunday night. It was about a fellow by the name of James Dunn who was a Scottish young man who became a Christ and all he wanted to do was share Jesus Christ with people. He was on the Titanic when it went down. He happened to be given a life vest and he gave it away. He helped women and children get on the life boats and every time he put a woman on he would ask her, "Are you right with Christ and have you given your life to Him?" When the Titanic broke apart and he went down with no life vest he floundered in the water. He found a life vest on another man and he took it off and as he was putting it on he saw a man without one so he gave it to him and said "Do you know Christ?" The man only looked at him. Dunn went down in the water. He came back up and found the man again and he reached out and grabbed the man who now had the life vest and said to him "Do you know Christ? Have you surrendered to Him?" Then James Dunn went down for the last time.

In London and in New York at the harbors they published two lists. Those lists you can see on almost every documentary about the Titanic. They have preserved them. There were two lists. One of them had a heading that said "Those Known to be Saved" – passengers known to be saved. The other one said "Those Known to be Lost." Jesus just took you to the edge of eternity. There are only two lists. There are those known to be saved, who know Jesus and He knows them and they follow Him. Then there are those known to be lost. They may know about Jesus. They may be religious but they don't follow Him. They don't surrender to Him and there will be many. I pray that those in that many are not sitting here today but in wisdom you've come and you've dug down, you've heard of Christ and now you've surrendered to Him. There won't be a great fall.

There will be great glory to your Savior. Come, dig down, put your trust in Him and follow Him. Jesus in this sermon just gave you the life preserver. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together this morning. Thank You for Your Word. I pray and ask You while this is a large number of people here this morning and I know every single one is headed to the moment that Jesus has peeled back with His Word. They are not going there non-religious because they have been here in church. They are not going there not having heard for they have heard. The question is, by faith and repentance, have they surrendered? O God, I pray that You would move so that whatever it is we are holding on to instead of surrendering to Christ who will hold onto us, I pray in this moment they will let it go. Let it go. See your Savior. He loves you. He will loosen you from not only the penalty of your sin but the power of it. Jesus I surrender to You, my Rock. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.