

October 13, 2002 by Steve Brandon



The Teaching of Jesus Christ - What Will You Build Your Life On?

Matthew 7:24-29 (James 1:21-27)

We come this morning to our final look at the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is at the point of closing up His marvelous sermon with a pointed application. His application will be, in a sense, a summing up all that He said with respect to the application of these truths into our lives. Jesus didn't preach all of these things in the Sermon on the Mount for people to know more. Jesus didn't preach all of these things for people to feel comfortable. Jesus preached all of these things to be applied in your life. These things ought to be accepted and believed and followed.

A few months ago, I heard a man speaking about preaching. He said that he always loves it when the preacher gets to the point where he asks, "So what?" He said that he knows that the question that is often in the minds of the congregation (as it should be) is this, "So, you have spent your 40 minutes up there talking about these things. So what?" We are coming to the point in Jesus' sermon when He answers the question, "So what?"

Matthew 7:24-27

(24) "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. (25) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and [yet] it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. (26) And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. (27) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."

We read these words and they are soaked with familiarity. We have heard this story again and again and again. Perhaps you sang it as a child. Our children know a song about these words. ...

"The wise man built His house upon the rock,
The wise man built His house upon the rock,
The wise man built His house upon the rock,
and the rains came a tumblin' down.

And the rains came down and the floods came up,
And the rains came down and the floods came up,
And the rains came down and the floods came up,
and the house on the rock stood firm.

The foolish man built His house upon the sand,
The foolish man built His house upon the sand,
The foolish man built His house upon the sand,
and the rains came a tumblin' down.

And the rains came down and the floods came up,
And the rains came down and the floods came up,
And the rains came down and the floods came up,
and the house on the sand went **SMASH!**

Jesus describes two houses that were built. From the indication that we have in His parable, we can't find anything different about them. They basically look the same. I went to lunch this week with a friend here in Rockford, who doesn't come to our church. I invited him over to our house, so he might see how my office is set up in my home. I also wanted him to meet my wife and children. So, when he came over, I took him into my house. When he stepped in the house, he said, "Whoa, this is weird." He said, "I used to live in a house exactly like this." The more he looked around, the more he discovered that the house was almost exactly like his house. He began saying, "Your fire-place looks just like our fire place did. Your counter-top looks just like ours did. We had a dining room right here as well." In a few spots he said, "Now this is a little different. We had a bay window here, but you don't. And this door, was slid over here to be closer to the stairs." Without even going upstairs, he described it exactly. He went downstairs and saw a peculiar closet that we have and said, "Your water meter is in that closet, right?" He said, "Oh, this is a little different, we had a wall down here. Our previous owners made this portion of the house here into a bed-room." He walked a little further and described how he had made a work-bench in the back room of his basement. He also noticed that the fuse box was in a little bit different location than ours was. Likewise, in Jesus' parable, we know of nothing different in the appearances of the houses.

In this parable, Jesus isn't talking about carpentry. He is talking about people. People, for the most part, look the same. When you are

standing in line at the grocery store, the person next to you often looks just like you do. Like you, they have a shopping cart, filled with many of the same things that you have in your shopping cart. Oh, perhaps there are some clues to your differences, like the actual items in your shopping carts and the behavior of your children. And as you continue to dig into their lives, you would probably soon discover big differences. But, on the surface, things appear the same. But, they are not. The thing that demonstrates the differences between these two people is the storm that will come.

In the case of both of these houses, a storm came upon each one of them. The rain descended, which caused the floods to come upon the house. The winds also blew against the houses and beat upon each of them (verses 25, 27). From every indication we have in Jesus' parable, the storm that beat upon both of these houses was the same. It's like a storm that comes through Rockford that beat upon my house and beat upon my friend's house. Sure, our houses may be a few miles away from each other, but the storm was the same. The storm that Jesus describes here is a storm that we adults would fear. It would be strong enough to destroy houses. The implication here is that the storm was strong and mighty - stronger and mightier than any storm that we have ever faced here in Rockford. Like a hurricane from the Gulf of Mexico comes up here and begins to pound upon our houses.

The storm demonstrates the difference between the two houses. The difference is the foundation upon which these houses were built. One is built on the rock. The other is built upon the sand. As my friend was leaving, he commented about the flowers in our front yard and how beautiful they are. Now, suppose my friend had said, "Yeah, we would like to have flowers like this, but our ground is terrible for planting things. Just below the grass, there is this solid slab of rock. We can't get anything to grow in our yard. The ground is simply too hard." Suppose then, I said, "Yeah, our ground is real soft. It is so easy to dig into. It is like sand." His observation of the flowers would identify the difference between our two houses. Sure, they may look alike, but his was built on rock and ours was built on sandy soil. On a sunny day, all looks the same. But when the hurricane comes, the differences between these two houses will be very apparent. The one house will fall down and the other house will not fall down.

Some people are like the house that is built upon the rock, who will be able to stand firm in the day of difficulty. Others are like the house that is built upon the sand, who will fall when the day of difficulty arrives. I believe that this storm is the final day, when Jesus returns. I read some sermons this week that said that this is speaking about "storms in your life." In other words, trials and difficulties. I don't believe that Jesus is speaking about the "storm" in your life. I believe that Jesus is speaking of the final day, when you stand before him. My reasoning is simple. Ever since verse 13, Jesus has been focussing upon your eternal destiny. The wide gate leads to destruction (verse 13). The narrow gate leads to life (verse 14). The bad tree is cut down and thrown into the fire (verse 19). Those who say, "Lord, Lord," will receive the judgement, "depart from me" (verse 23).

I don't believe that the storm that Jesus is speaking about here are the trials in your life. Though it is very much true that those who have founded their lives upon the rock will be able to endure when difficulties come much better than those who have no hope. When a loved one passes away or when you contract some debilitating illness or when you lose your job, I will affirm that a life that is right before God will be a stable life in these crisis times. But this isn't what Jesus is speaking about here. I believe that Jesus is speaking about the final day, when the final storm comes.

When that final storm comes, it will be obvious what sort of person you are. Notice how Jesus describes these people. He describes both of them as "hearing these words of mine." (verses 24, 26). They are hearing what Jesus is saying to them. In other words, we might liken them both might be compared with those people, who are in the church, hearing the word of God expounded each week. Jesus isn't comparing the person who listens to the words of Jesus in church and reads the words of Jesus during the week with the person who never goes to church or reads the Bible at all. This is important. Catch this. Jesus is describing two people, who are both religious. In recent weeks, we have seen that the false prophets are within the church, practicing their religious deeds and their lawlessness. We have seen that the contrast between the wide and narrow ways are not between the church and the world, but between professing Christians and genuine Christians. It is no different here. Jesus is describing religious people, who are listening to Him speak.

But notice the difference. The one responds in obedience. The other responds in disobedience. The one applies the things that are taught. The other neglects the things that are taught. This creates a huge difference between the two. Sure, the houses may look much alike, but in actuality, they are quite different. One has built his life upon hears what God says and believing it and doing it. The other has build his life upon hearing what God says and neglecting it. This couldn't be any clearer in the text. Verse 24 says, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them (in the margin, "he does them"), may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock, ..." Verse 26 says, "And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them (in the margin, "he does not do them"), will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand, ..."

Here is the "so what?" of Jesus' sermon. Jesus is confronting each of us with our response to His words. When you hear God's word taught what is your response? What do you do? When you read the Bible on your own, how do you respond? What do you do? In the past seven months that we have been examining the Sermon on the Mount, how have you responded to these words, week after week after week? When these words have come into your ears, have you been confronted in your lack of obedience and cried out to God to give you a heart that longs to obey? I have thought of five bad responses to the word and five good responses to the word. Which of these are typical of your response?

Five bad responses to the word

1. That portion of the Bible doesn't apply to me.
2. I'm saved by grace, and I don't need to actually do anything.
3. I don't need to worry about obedience, Jesus will still forgive me.
4. Nobody could ever do that, so why should I try?
5. You don't understand my situation. I can't do that.

Five good responses to the word

1. Something has to change at my house. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24:15).

2. I realize that my faith is weak. Lord, I believe, help my unbelief (Mark 9:24).
3. That's a hard saying, Jesus. But, I'll obey it, because I love you.
4. God, I know that you can do all things, change my heart and help me obey.
5. I'll go home today and make it right.

Often, when Jesus called His disciples, He said, "Follow Me" (Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 9:9). What is following Jesus, but trusting and obeying Him every step of the way. As a child, did you ever play, "follow the leader"? I remember playing this game. Sometimes, it was difficult to follow the leader, particularly when they climbed something really high, or squeezed through something really tight. But I always remember trying my best to follow. I never just sat there and watched the leader. It is no different with Jesus. When He says, "Follow me," it doesn't make sense to sit in your chair and do nothing.

The Bible isn't simply a book that contains nice sayings for us to listen to and enjoy and think about, like other pieces of literature. If you like literature, you need to beware, lest you find yourself liking the Bible for the same reason. Neither is the Bible an academic text-book to be studied. If you are of the academic type, you also need to beware, lest you are attracted to the Bible, simply because of its academic challenge. But **the Bible is a life-changing book to be read and obeyed.**

You don't have to look very far in the Bible to see this contrast between those who simply hear the word of God and those who obey the word of God. Look back to 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." The issue here is that these false prophets heard Jesus speak and spoke for Jesus, though they themselves refused to follow His teachings. Rather than practicing righteousness, they practiced lawlessness. Jesus didn't care much whether they could talk the talk. Jesus wanted to see them walk the walk. Remember when Jesus said, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46).

Jesus condemned the Scribes and Pharisees, who "seated themselves in the chair of Moses. Therefore, all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them. And they tie up heavy loads and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger" (Matt. 23:2-4). See, it's not the saying from the lips that God wants. Neither is it the hearing in the ear that God wants. Rather, it is the obedience from the heart that God wants.

Perhaps you remember the great commission, when Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe (that is, keep and obey) all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus wasn't speaking of people gathered around in a circle, making comments about a Bible passage. Jesus was speaking about disciples who would teach others to obey the words of Jesus.

There was a time in Jesus' ministry when a woman heard Jesus teach. She raised her voice and shouted out, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed." Jesus replied, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it" (Luke 11:27-28). At one point in Jesus' ministry, he told this parable about a master who left and put a steward in charge of his servants. Upon returning, Jesus said that the one was blessed, because he was found to be doing everything that the master had told him to do. But one who said, "My master will be a long time in coming, ..." and so spent the time in disobedience to his master. Jesus said, that the one who "knew his master's will and did not ... act in accord with his will shall receive many lashes" (Luke 12:41-48).

Children, you know the picture, don't you? When your parents say, "Go clean your room," what do they expect you to do? They expect you to go and clean your room. They don't want to find you fifteen minutes later playing with your Legos or your dolls in your room. They want you to obey. It is the same with Jesus. When He speaks, His words are to be followed. Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). Note that they don't earn merit from God, for Jesus said in the next verse, "I give eternal life to them." Following Jesus is the response of faith and trust in Jesus. Jesus told His disciples, "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them" (John 13:17). There are many other passages we could turn to, especially in 1 John and in Revelation (Rom. 2:13; Eph. 2:10; 1 John 2:4-5; 3:10; Rev. 22:7) that demonstrate that the genuine believer is the one who hears and obeys the message.

I must admit that obedience to Jesus is often the hard route. It is a lot easier to build a house on the sand than it is upon the rock. On sand, you can dig a foundation much easier and quicker. As a result, your house may be built quite quickly. However, the one who builds on the rock must take a long time to secure his foundation upon the rock. In the rock, you need to chip away and dig with difficulty. It takes a long time to dig the foundation. But it is important to do so. Obedience to Jesus is often a hard thing, especially when the world is drifting far from Jesus' words and you are called to stand firm. Daily diligence in reading the Bible is difficult to prioritize, as is the gathering of your family for daily worship in your home.

As a pastor, I periodically get calls from people in desperate situations, looking for money to help them out of a bind. I invariably always ask them the same question, "Have you called your own church and asked those who know you for financial help?" Without exception, I have always received the same answer, "I don't go to church." These are the type of people who are looking for a quick fix to solve their problems, rather than building their house upon the rock.

Perhaps many of you are aware of the inherent problems that others have faced when seeking to build upon the sand. In 1174 the Italian architect Bonnano Pisano began work on a 185 foot tall tower for the cathedral of the city of Pisa. Things were going fine until they discovered a little problem. The builders discovered that the soil was much softer than they had anticipated, and the foundation was far too shallow (only ten feet) than needed to hold the eight-story tower. Sure enough, you know what happened. It began to tilt. For 800 years it has stood, but leaning 18 feet. The tower has become so famous for its characteristic leaning that it is called, "The Leaning Tower of Pisa." It was only recently that they have secured its foundation. This is a great picture of what a life that is built upon the sand looks like.

I want us to look in depth at one passage: James 1:22-27. Perhaps you have noticed that I don't have any points in my sermon this morning,

because I have only one point. I want to continue to bang the drum of application that Jesus has given to us. Jesus said that there are two types of people. Some of them hear and don't do. Others hear and do. We are to be the wise man who hears the words of Jesus, embraces them and does them. James 1 contains a perfect illustration of Jesus' application.

Let's look first at **verse 22**, "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." This is consistent with many of the passages that I have just quoted for you. You need to be a doer of the word, and not a hearer only. Notice what it says about the hearer: the hearers of the word are those who delude themselves. This means that they are thinking and reasoning within themselves about eternal matters and have reasoned incorrectly. They have persuaded themselves away from the truth. They think that they are doing pretty well, just because they are hearing the word. Though they know that they aren't obeying the word, they know that they have been listening to the word, which is better than nothing, right?

Is it good to hear the word of God? Sure it is. I practice this. I think that in any given week, I probably listen to 7-10 sermons. There are a few in this congregation who even top me in this. I do this because I love hearing the word of God preached. I listen at my desk when doing administrative work that allows me to listen. I bring tapes into my car and listen while driving. I have wired my house to allow me to listen to the word of God preached. However, hearing the word without obedience is useless. For those of us who hear it most are in the most danger of not applying it.

Those of you who are parents need to realize your ability to teach your children to be hearers only! When your children see you come to church and hear the word preached, but return home in disobedience, they will learn to delude themselves into thinking that they can hear the word of God and not obey either. Sure, you may train up a generations of church goers and pew sitters, but they will not be building their house upon the rock. May God help us to be consistent in our homes!

Notice how James continues, "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was" (**verses 23-24**). The picture is clear. James says that there is a man, who looks into a mirror at his face. He observes what he looks like, but when he leaves the reflection of the mirror, he forgets what sort of person he was. He acts as if he never looked in the mirror in the first place. It would be like me looking in a mirror and studying my face. When I go away, I tell others that I have a very small nose or that my teeth are very straight. Others would look at me and say, "Are you kidding me?" James says that the one who is a hearer of the word, and not a doer is like the man who looks in the mirror, but forgets.

The analogy is simple. This man loves to hear the word. He loves to hear the man of God exposit the word of God. While he listens to it, he is all smiles. Yet, when he goes away and deals with his wife at home or his boss at work or his neighbors down the street, he demonstrates that he has forgotten everything that he heard. It is as if he never heard the word in the first place. It is as if he never looked at the mirror in the first place. Or, as they say, "out of sight is out of mind."

James contrasts this man with the man in **verse 25**, "But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does." James says that it is the one who looks at the "law of liberty, and abides by it" who will be blessed. This is the one who looks at himself in the mirror and when he goes away, he still remembers what he looks like. He hasn't forgotten what he heard. When he hears the word preached (or reads the Bible in his devotions), it makes an impact on the way that he lives. "Out of sight" is **not** "out of mind."

James tells us that it is the "word implanted, which is able to save your souls" (verse 21). The picture is that of a seed, coming and being implanted within your body, which grows and manifests itself in your obedience. We recently planted some grass seed in our back yard, which is very patchy. The instructions were clear. We were to water the seeds and water the seeds and water the seeds. Then they will be implanted within the ground, and then they will grow. Well, we have been negligent in watering the seeds. Thus, they haven't been implanted. Thus, they haven't grown. The seeds have remained upon the soil and haven't penetrated into the earth. I checked yesterday and we have very little grass growing where we planted the seed.

Picture the word of God as a seed. When you hear it, it will either bounce off and remain outside of you, so that when it comes to making choices in life, it doesn't matter what the word says, because it is far from you. Or, the word of God will enter into you and be implanted into you. It will start to germinate and send out its roots and its blades will appear. Things will start growing out of you. Out of your mouth, you have broccoli growing. Out of your ears, you have lettuce sprouting up. These are the things that the implanted word produces in you. It is the word of God, implanted, taken root, and sprouting forth in your obedience to the word that saves you. When you hear the word and believe it, it will produce in you an obedience to it.

James follows with two examples, "If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless" (**verse 26**). Here is the guy, who has heard the word of God, but it has bounced off his ears. He thinks that he is religious in all these things. But, his vocabulary is unchanged. He still launches out at others with his words. His television viewing is unchanged. His humility and service to others is little. James says, "This man's religion is worthless" (verse 26). This is because the word has never become implanted.

Yet the contrast is given, "This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (verse 27). These things are created when the word is implanted in you. It is the "law of liberty" (verse 25) that has come and taken root in your life. You realize God's mercy to you in the death of His Son, and the freedom He has granted you in Christ Jesus. You are no longer a slave to your sin, but you can now respond in merciful deeds toward others (Rom. 6:14). Furthermore, you see the wretched defilements of the world, and want nothing to do with it. You keep yourself "unstained" by the world. It may have its defilements, but you stay away, because the implanted word has so changed your desires against this. This is the exact picture that Jesus gives us in the Sermon on the Mount.

Be clear in this. I'm not advocating a works righteousness, as if perfect obedience to the law in every area of our life is all that will merit

anything before God. In actuality, the things we do will never merit our righteousness before God. In Men's Equippers yesterday, we examined Philippians 3, when Paul laid out all of the religiously righteous benefits that he might look at to achieve righteous merit before God. Paul said that he was circumcised the eighth day, of the nation Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee, zealous for his faith, and blameless according to the law (Phil. 3:5-6). If there was anyone who has ever lived that could ever have obtained his own righteousness through his own works, it was Paul. Yet, Paul considered all of these religious benefits to be nothing before God. Paul said that they were like a dirty-diaper. This is because we desperately need a righteousness that is not our own, which can only come through faith in Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:9).

But I am talking about a transforming righteousness that we are given by faith in Jesus. Again, in Men's Equippers yesterday, we saw the complete transformation that such an understanding of the gospel generates in someone's life. Paul's great desire was to know Christ more and more and be united with Him in His resurrection and sufferings. Our obedience is essentially the manifestation of the word of God in our life. It is the word implanted, which produces obedience in us. We are "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:10). Our obedience flows from a heart that loves the LORD our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Also, be clear that I'm not advocating perfection in every area of your life. As long as we are in the flesh, we will always struggle with our sinfulness toward God and toward others. You show me a perfect man, who never sins or stumbles, and I'll show you Jesus. When Jesus said in 5:48 that "you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," I believe that Jesus said this to convict us of the impossibility of doing this (that was the purpose of chapter 5). He was pointing to Himself, who alone could fulfill the perfect requirements of the law (Matt. 5:17). When we hear that we are "to be perfect," it creates in us a "poor in spirit" attitude (5:3). We "mourn" over our lack of perfect obedience and are "meek" and lowly (5:4-5). This type of humility will create in us a hunger and a thirst for righteousness (Matt. 5:6). The doer of the word is the one characterized by longing for righteousness.

I have entitled my sermon this morning, "What Will You Build Your Life On?" And so I ask you, "What Will You Build Your Life On?" The only stable rock to be found in this life is Jesus Christ and our obedience to His words. Will your life be characterized by obedience to God's words or by disobedience to God's words? The one is the life that will stand in the judgement. The other is a life that will fall in the judgment.

Up until this point, I have been speaking in general about our response to God's word. Yet, let me point you to Matthew 7:24, "Therefore everyone who hears **these words** of Mine." The words which Jesus is speaking about here are the words that Jesus preached on the hill, near the sea of Galilee, some 2000 years ago. They are recorded for us in Matthew 5-7. We have been studying them since March. And so I ask you, "What Will You Build Your Life On?" Will you build your life upon the words of Jesus that we have examined closely these last seven months? Or will you neglect Jesus' words?

I want to close my sermon by being very practical with you. We began our study of the Sermon on the Mount with an outline that I would like for us to review. As we review it, I want you to examine your life and examine how well you have embraced Jesus' words and applied them in your life. With each of these major sections I want you to examine your own response to them.

1. Jesus describes kingdom citizens (5:3-16).

Jesus began His sermon by describing the citizens of His kingdom. These are those who are blessed: those who are poor in spirit, mourn over their sinfulness, and are gentle with others. They have a hunger and a thirst for righteousness and seek to be peacemakers. They affect those around them for the good, as salt and light in the world. They are often persecuted because of their likeness to Jesus. And I ask you, "Are these types of characteristics describing you? Are you merciful and pure of heart? Are you humble toward others? Are you honest with God about your own sin?"

2. Jesus requires perfect righteousness (5:17-48)

In His next major section, Jesus describes the perfect righteousness that we need. He sums up this section by saying that we need to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect. In other words, our righteousness needs to be complete in every way. Jesus described how our righteousness needs to extend far beyond simply refraining from murdering others. It needs to extend to our words and our attitudes toward others. We ought not even speak wrongly with others. In the arena of our sexual purity, Jesus extends God's requirements far past what might be discerned from court records to our hearts. He said that we cannot even think wrongly at all (not even once) about wrongful sexual activity. We need to be always true to our word, not just when we make an official vow. We must love our enemies as ourselves and never seek any revenge, whatsoever.

Praise the Lord that Jesus fulfilled every single one of these instructions to us (5:17). Yet, we aren't to annul these commandments (5:19), but seek to keep them. And so, I ask you, "Are these standards of righteousness what you are seeking? Do you grieve in your heart when you fail? Do you seek God's help in these areas?" Jesus instructs us to hear and obey.

3. Jesus explains practical righteousness (6:1-7:12)

In this section of the sermon, Jesus describes what our practical righteousness should be like. In the first verse, He warns of practicing our righteousness before others to be noticed by them. He tells us to give to others in such a manner that we don't even think about what we gave. We are to pray by going into our inner room and praying to God alone. We are to fast for God alone to see. We are not to treasure the world's riches, nor be anxious for the future, or be judgmental of others. Our prayers should be constant and earnest and our love for others should be like we would them to do to us.

My questions to you are straightforward, "Do you practice your righteousness for people to see? When you come to church, are you coming to please God or for others to see you? When you give to others, are you seeking a reward in the gift? Are you praying in accordance with God's will? Do you long for His name to be regarded as holy among the nations? Are you desiring His kingdom to come right now? Are you desirous of His will to be accomplished here on the earth? Do you pray in accordance with these desires? Do you realize your great need for

God's daily provision for your necessities? Do you pray for your sins to be forgiven in the same way as you are forgiving of others? Are you aware of your great need of God's help in time of temptation? When difficulties come upon you, do you devote yourself to fasting and prayer before God? Are you seeking satisfaction in the worlds goods, which will be destroyed by moth and rust? Are you anxious concerning the future, or are you resting in God's care for you, as He does for the birds and flowers? Are you judgmental in your spirit? Do you look down upon and speak poorly about others, who don't live up to your own level of righteousness? Are you constantly praying for all of your needs? Are you loving your neighbor as yourself?"

These are simply applicational questions that Jesus would have us to ask ourselves. He has instructed us in all of these areas. We are to respond in following Him.

4. Jesus presents entry requirements (7:13-27)

This is the final section of the sermon, in which Jesus wraps things up. He calls us to a choice between two options. We can enter the wide gate and travel the broad path to destruction or we can enter the small gate and travel the narrow path to life. We can listen to the false prophets and find ourselves cast from the presence of Jesus forever or we can avoid these men and their teachings and live. We can hear the words of Jesus and ignore them or we can believe them and embrace them and follow them.

Which path are you on? Have you entered through the right door? Are you travelling the narrow path? Or, have you chosen the path of least resistance, which enables you to forsake the instructions of Jesus, while allowing you to think yourself righteous?

Those who heard these words were "amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29). Indeed, these have been amazing words. My prayer for Rock Valley Bible Church is that we would not be those who hear these words and ignore them, but that we would be those "who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them" (Matt. 7:24).

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 13, 2002 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.