

“The Curses”

A Sermon for the Family of God

Matthew 7:13-8:1

Pastor Jeff Stivason

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Jeff: Father in heaven, You are a great God and greatly to be praised. We bow before You today and recognize that You are God and there is no other. And yet we also bow before You, recognizing that You are Father through the Lord Jesus Christ and the grace that He came clothed in. Father, as we bow before You this morning, we are mindful that we look upon You in all of Your radiance through Your word. And we pray that Your Holy Spirit would bring what is communicated in the Scriptures to our own experience. And Father, we thank You for the way in which You’ve already done that in our lives, bringing to us the gift of salvation and making known to us the reality and the power of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ by Your Spirit.

But Father, as we think about You today, we also pray for those who are heavy upon our hearts. And Father, we think about Dale. And Father, we ask that You will indeed bless this man who is struggling. We ask that You will care for Him and show Your presence to Him in a magnificent way.

Father, we also pray for Sarah, and we’re thankful for Doug and for Lydia and for the rest of her family that have gathered around her. We’re thankful for the way in which they’ve ministered to her so carefully in these days. But Father, we’re thankful for the way in which Your providence orchestrated all the events of these last six days, such that she is possibly going to be going home today. And we pray for that. And Father, we pray that this would be the first step in a new direction for her. And we pray for health and healing. We pray for vitality. Father, we pray for the family, and ask that Your hand would be upon them for good, that You would be teaching them many things in these days, many things about Your own goodness and about Your own way of providence, and the way in which You sustain Your people.

Father, we give You thanks for the word we heard about Bruce. We pray for His continued recovery. We’re thankful for the positive things, like his being able to walk around the neighborhood without a cane. We pray for his strength to continue to marshal, and we pray for his resolve. And Father, we ask and pray that You will be with us today.

As we open Your word, we pray that You’ll help us. We need it as we look to You through Your Spirit to teach us through Your word. We pray that You would do that. And in studying it, we ask that our lives would be changed. We pray that we would be shaped after the Lord Jesus Christ, conformed to His image. And we know that when we study Your word we are engaged in an activity that will last not just today or tomorrow, but that will have its effects throughout all eternity. Father, we pray and ask that You’ll bless us today in our study, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. Well this is our last day in The Sermon on the Mount. And you’ll notice that we are in the conclusion and the curses! (*A chuckle.*) Yeah, it’s going to be a happy day, right? Sorry. (*Laughter*)

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Actually, I want to say this to you. Isn't it interesting? I think Jesus would have failed a homiletics class today, right? (*Laughter*) Aren't you supposed to start with a story that taps you, and then kind of end it with something positive? Well Jesus begins with the positive, begins with blessings, and He ends it with curses. It strikes you as very much caught in the cloth of the Old Testament way of doing things.

I don't know if I mentioned this to you before, but whenever I read this Sermon on the Mount, I always think about how Israel was arranged on the two hillsides. And the one side responded with the blessings and the other side responded with the curses. And the law was read in response to it all. And so there's this idea of the same thing going on—blessings and curses and the law in the midst. So it's kind of a wonderful echo of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, we're in the conclusion section this morning.

The way in which we've been working through The Sermon on the Mount really does reflect what I already showed you. So we have the intro and the conclusion, and then the Beatitudes or blessings, and the curses that follow up the whole sermon, and then really the two great commandments in the middle—love your neighbor and love God, love God and love your neighbor. And we've been through that. So you have that in mind already.

Now turn to Matthew 7:13 and following. We're going through 8:1 because you'll see how 8:1 winds up the entire sermon. I'd like to have a reader this morning if I could, somebody to read it nice and loud and clear. Sure, Don. Yes.

Don: This is from the New King James.

Jeff: All right.

Don: *“Enter by the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it, because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life, and there are few who find it.*

“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit. But a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you! Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house. And it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, the floods came, and the wind blew and beat on that house, and it fell. And great was its fall.

“And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. When

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He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Okay. All right. Thank you, Don.

Don: You’re welcome.

Jeff: Today we’re going to look at two ways. We’re going to look at *the false preacher*, and we’re going to look at *the false professor*. On your outline it says that we’re going to look at two preachers and two professors, because I think implicitly that there’s always a good and there’s always a bad preacher, always a good and always a bad professor. We’re going to focus on the bad or the false preacher, the bad or the false professor, and then *the two foundations*. That’s basically what we’re going to look at today. And there’s a lot there, and we could have divided this into a lot more sections. But I want to give you the general idea behind it all today.

And so each of those sections is going to look at each one of the sections that we already heard. And you can line those things up as you look at them.

We’re going to look today, first of all, at *the two ways*. Now the two ways, the very first thing that we heard today, was something that I think is difficult. You want to be on the small and narrow way. And if you think about some other passages in the Scriptures, you can think about passages that reflect on that idea of being on the small, narrow way.

Let me give you just one of them. It’s in Luke 13 verse 24. It’s reflective of this passage and it actually includes something of what we’ve read already in our text. In verse 24 of Luke 13 Jesus says, “*Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter, and will not be able.*”

Now when you think about that, I think that text is, or can be in some ways, a frightening text. Those texts, texts like that, are called the *paucitus salvandorum*—the paucity of salvation, the few that be saved. The little likelihood of salvation may be a better way of expressing this sort of concept.

Now that kind of concept that is found in Scripture is oftentimes used in order to harangue people about not doing enough, right? And in some ways I think there’s something to be said for that, taken in the right way.

What do I mean? Well B. B. Warfield wrote an article called *Are There Few That Be Saved?* And his answer was much like his mentor, Charles Hodge. No, there are many who are saved. When you look over the long hall of history—and the Princetonians included in that the infants who died in infancy. And so, when you include all of that, there are many who are saved.

But this is what Warfield said. Warfield said that passages like these, and passages like the one that we have in our text, they communicate something significant to people who are of faith. They, or better Jesus, is communicating or inciting “*a strenuous activity to make one’s calling and election sure.*”

Now the question that has to be asked is this. Sure to who? To whom are we to make our calling and election sure? To God? Are we convincing God that we are of the elect?
(Laughter)

Participant: No way!

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Jeff: I’m glad. That’s a great response, Tom! You have a good response. *(A chuckle)* Right? No, we are to make our calling and election sure to ourselves, and for love of neighbor to those around us, and for the good of a watching world that needs the gospel, to those around us.

And so, brothers, let me say it like this. Jesus is saying this to us. You know, you really ought to think about making salvation a priority in your life. And it’s a really good thing. *(Laughter)* No! No, no, no! He’s saying, “*Strive to enter through the narrow gate*”, not because you accomplish anything, because it’s all accomplished in Jesus Christ. But strive, making every effort to make your calling and election sure to yourself and to those around you.

And again, let me say it like this. It’s not as if this verse ought to undermine assurance. You know, speaking of the Reformation, in the Reformation do you know what Cardinal Bellermino said was the chief heresy of the Reformation and of the Protestant Reformers? Do you know what it was? We think that it’s justification by faith. But you know, it’s not.

Participant: From who’s perspective?

Jeff: From theirs.

Participant: You mean the Catholics?

Jeff: Yes. From the Roman Catholic perspective, which was the medieval church at the time, what was the chief error of the Protestant Reformation and the Reformers? I’ll tell you what it was. Cardinal Bellermino said,— Yes?

Participant: The doctrine of assurance.

Jeff: Assurance, assurance of salvation.

Participant: You mean salvation by God alone.

Second Participant: Through Christ alone.

Jeff: It’s the idea that one could be assured that he was saved. This was the chief error of the Protestants—the chief error.

So I am not saying that the *paucitus salvandorum* undermines assurance. It doesn’t. But we all know that there are those tensions throughout Scripture that are majestic tensions. We are saved in Jesus Christ fully. So strive, right? You are light, therefore live as the light. You’ve been seated with Christ in the heavenlies. Therefore, what? Set your eyes on things above.

Do you see the idea? There’s the idea that’s robust, the sense that it is all yours in Jesus Christ. Now strive. Go ahead.

Participant: That goes back to that indicative and imperative.

Jeff: Absolutely. Yes, the indicative, the imperative. Thanks for bringing that lesson in. It’s always rich stuff. *(Laughter)* Okay, good, good.

All right. So let me move on. This passage falls into that category. But we need to ask a question like this. How do we understand a passage like this that falls into that kind of category?

Well here’s the way I would describe it. I would describe it like this. What we’re really asking is, are we living the Christian life?

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Now as you look throughout church history, there have been people who looked at The Sermon on the Mount and scratched their heads and said this. What do we do with this? What do we make of this?

I’ll give you a couple of answers. There’s one answer that says this. This is in the medieval church, and actually before that. There’s one answer that says, you know what? This isn’t really speaking to the average everyday Christian. This is really speaking to those who give themselves to the monastic life. And therefore it becomes a higher level of Christianity. That’s them.

And then there were those who came along within the Reformation and said this. They said, “That’s wrong.” But their answer was—and this is the way it was described—this was an impossible ideal. In other words, yes, this is what you were supposed to be doing. But you’ll never reach that ideal. So it becomes this impossible ideal.

And there are others who try to explain away what you find in The Sermon on the Mount. But I want to say this to you. I want to say that Jesus—go figure!—actually expects us to hear and do these things.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: I mean, I know it’s a novel concept. *(Laughter)* Try and hang in there with me. You know, I think that’s why He says what He says about doing them. And we’re going to find out along the way why it is that we can do these things—and hey, find forgiveness when we fail! We’ll see it, right?

But I want to talk to you about how this ought to be understood. This idea about the narrow way, the small way, the path, ought to be understood in terms of the course of life’s direction. And you know this.

Now I’m going to give you an idea about this. Just think about it like this. I want you to think about this boxer. The boxer is no good. I mean, absolutely no good. He’s a worthless boxer. He doesn’t train well. He doesn’t eat right.

This promoter comes to him and says, “I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. I am going to give you the opportunity for a fight. And if you win, you will be a contender for the championship. You’ll be able to fight the top dog.

And so the guy says, “Man, this is an opportunity!” So what begins to happen? What begins to happen is that he gets into the gym. He starts hitting the heavy bag and the speed bag. He’s training like crazy. And he’s eating right. And he’s going to bed early so he can get up early. And he’s going for a run before he comes to the Brave Men! Right? *(Laughter)*

Now he’s driving down the road. And he sees the Golden Arches. *(Laughter)* You know what I mean? And he hasn’t had a fry in a long time. *(Laughter)* And all of a sudden, he’s tempted. Ooh! You know, the fry, the grease, right? And the Coke, you know? You know what I’m talking about? It helps the fry down, right? *(Laughter)* And he pulls in and he orders the small, no! The medium, no! A large bag of fries. *(Laughter)* And a Coke, right? And he drinks it.

And then he feels guilty, right? He feels like he’s done something wrong. He cheated the promoter who has given him the opportunity, right? And so he doesn’t get any more fries.

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You know, he’s still tempted once in a while. Sometimes he gets up later than he ought to get up. Sometimes, but not enough for anyone to notice.

See, if you were looking in on this man’s life, you would say, “Man, this guy has got it all together.” But if you were to say that to him, if you were to say, “Man, you’ve got it all together!”, he would say to you, “You know what? I don’t think you really realize what’s going on inside of me. I had fries the other day. And I was supposed to get up at 4:30 and run from 5:00 until 5:45. And I got up at 5:45 and missed the run entirely. You know, I’m tempted to quit all the time.” You see?

But looking into his life, we would say that’s a good course and direction. And if you were to ask him, if you would say, “What do you think?”, he would say, “Well, yeah, I think the course and the direction of my life is entirely different. But I know the places where I struggle like you don’t.”

You see, that’s the idea of the Christian life. And that’s what Warfield is talking about when he talks about the *paucitus salvandorum*, the paucity passages, passages that seem to indicate that there are few saved. No, he says this. No, no, no. These passages are not put there for us to say, “Oh, there aren’t many people who are saved!” No. They’re put there to remind us to strive. That’s why they’re put there. Okay. Yes, Bill?

Bill: You’re going beyond verse 13 and 14. And you started out with 13 and 14. I think there’s a simpler explanation.

Jeff: Well I’m going beyond, but I’ve not left. I’m still there. *(A chuckle)*

Bill: I think that in all of Scripture it teaches that there is only a remnant that is saved. I think back to where the children of Israel left Egypt. And how many survived? Only three—Moses, Caleb and Joshua.

Jeff: Yes, right.

Bill: For those forty years.

Jeff: Yes, I know.

Bill: A pretty small remnant.

Jeff: I know. But when you get to Revelation 7, it says that there’s “*a multitude before the Throne that no one could count.*” That’s a big number.

Bill: Yes, but in a generation.

Jeff: Right. So, like Warfield says, we’re looking at it throughout the course of the world. And then it depends on what you believe about infant salvation and those sorts of things.

Bill: It could be, you know—

Participant: Speak up, Bill.

Bill: Okay.

Jeff: He says he’s slow this morning. Cut him a break here.

Participant: Thanks, Sig.

Bill: Talking about the narrow gate.

Jeff: Yes.

Bill: I mean, the people in Jesus’ time never got it. I was just reading yesterday when He cleansed the temple. Later the Pharisees asked Him, “*From where did You get this*

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authority?” And He didn’t tell them. But He followed with a parable of the landowner who had a vineyard.

Jeff: Yes.

Bill: And lent that vineyard out, and what they did to his servants and finally to his son. Well, all along in Jewish history, God sent prophets to them, and they would not listen.

Jeff: Yes.

Bill: They never did after that. My perspective is that it’s only through Scripture, and only for Christians, because the pagans don’t care what the Scripture says.

Jeff: Well yes, of course. Absolutely. And I don’t want to speculate on the number of the remnant. So I’m just going to say this. I’m going to go with over the course of history, there’s a number that no one could count. It’s obviously a big number. So we’ll leave that to the Lord.

But that’s the idea. The idea is the small, narrow life. I think the way we ought to understand these passages is that it’s the course and the direction of life.

Now let me speak about this small and narrow life just for a minute. And I want to talk to you about it because I think this is important for us as Christians to think about. And I think that it’s important for us to understand what’s being said here.

When you think about these two words *small* and *narrow*, they give the impression of confining or pressure. And I think that we ought to think about this in terms of the difficulty of the Christian life. The striving is striving because it is difficult.

Now let me say this to you. I think we need to put that into perspective, though. And let me put it in perspective like this. It was in the ‘70s, I think. Maybe the ‘80s. There was a show on TV which I think is still on. I don’t watch it because I didn’t like it when I was a kid. It was called “Dr. Who.” Did anybody ever watch “Dr. Who” back in the ‘70s? When we first got cable, right? The guy with the long, colorful scarf? Remember him? You know?

And my dad watched it. And I wanted to be with my dad. So I watched it, right? And I just said to him the other day, this past year, I said, “Do you remember when we used to watch ‘Dr. Who’ together?”

And he goes, “Yeah.” He goes, “I never liked that show.” (*Laughter*)

I said, “I watched it because you watched it. I thought you liked it.”

He goes, “I watched it because I thought you liked it.” (*Laughter*) Oh, man!

Anyway, that show had what was called the Tardis. And the Tardis was the time machine. And all it was was a call box. That’s all it was. You’d see this call box sitting there and then they would run in. And when they would run in, they would run in and there was this enormous spaceship inside. And there was room for fifty people on the inside of the Tardis.

You know, as I got older and became a Christian, I started thinking about what the Scriptures say about passages like this and about the law. The law from the outside looks very small. It looks like the Tardis. Don’t do this and don’t do that! You know, the Sabbath Day is really hard. It’s confining and restrictive. What can I do on the Sabbath. You know, that’s what people ask.

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And when you get on the inside, you realize that this isn't confining or restrictive. This is actually freedom!

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: It's actually big and large and it gives me a place to stand and room to move. But it gives me boundaries so that I don't transgress. And I think that when He talks about the small and narrow way, I think He's trying to help us to understand how it was that we viewed the small and narrow way from the outside. But I think it's that insider thing where one realizes that once he gets in, one realizes that the “*yoke is easy and the burden is light.*”

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: There's the idea.

Participant: There you go.

Jeff: So it's bigger on the inside. Well let me ask you. Any questions or thoughts on that particular section before we leave it? Yes, Sig?

Sig: How does that yoke get easier when you get on the inside, or how does that burden get lighter?

Jeff: I think that what begins to happen is that you take Christ with you into the self-reflection. So for instance, I think that Romans strikes me as a great way to understand this, because Paul is preaching. And he's preaching and he's hammering the Gentiles in the beginning. And then in the back there's this Jewish guy and he's saying, “Yeah. You give it to them, Paul! They need it!”, right?

And so Paul stops with the *they* and he starts with the *you*, right? And he deals with the Jewish man. And he says to the Jewish man, “You're in the same leaky moral boat.”

And then he stops saying anything to both of them. He says, “Let me tell you something. You both stand before an impartial Judge.”

And then he says to the Gentiles, “You who don't think you ought to be judged because you don't have the law? Guess what? You do have the law. You have the work of the law written on your heart. And guess what, you Jews? You Jewish folks have the law. But you think that just having the law is what it's all about. But you don't obey it. Oh, and by the way, don't think that circumcision is going to help you in this.” You know, that sort of thing. And then chapter 3 is that you're all under judgment.

So here's the difference. I think that when Paul speaks to them about God being an impartial Judge, and judging them according to their works, I think that what e's trying to drive them to see is that without Christ—you know, it's “*But God*” in 3:21—but God sends Jesus Christ to be the propitiation for our sins. How does it become light? It becomes light because “*but God.*”

See, here's the problem. A lot of guys love the Puritans. And I'm one of them. I love the Puritans. But a lot of guys who love the Puritans get into a mistake. They think that the Puritans taught an introspection that ought to lead to my self-loathing, self-abasement and my lack of assurance. And I don't think that's what the Puritans taught. I think the Puritans taught that when you do introspection, you ought always to take Christ with you.

Participant: Amen.

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Jeff: And when you take Christ with you, you have an Advocate, right? And so here’s what guys do. They go into the law and they read the law. And they say, “Oh, that’s so me! And I do that. And so let me think now. Let me do a taxonomy of all my sins.” And then they get into this depression, rather than taking Christ with them and saying, “I’ve done that. Lord, I confess that. Yes, I think I’ve done that, too. And I want to confess that, too”, right? And that’s where the burden gets light, when one introspects with the law, I think. Does that make sense?

Sig: It makes all the difference in the world.

Jeff: Yes.

Sig: Well, what’s taxonomy?

Jeff: Yes. Subdivisions. *(Laughter)*

Participant: If you don’t mind, I’d like to put a little spin on it.

Jeff: Put it on. Go ahead. *(Laughter)*

Participant: To Sig’s question, to me, when you enter that gate, you begin to understand that you need to depend more on Jesus and less on yourself.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And when you do that, the burden is easy.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Participant: Couldn’t it also be not necessarily reduced to this, but Peter said, *“There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* For the audience around Christ that would have been kind of offensive and difficult, because they’ve been going down a whole different path. And yet Christ pointed to that narrow gate. That’s the way, right?

Jeff: Yes. And let me add to that. I want you to think about the beginning of The Sermon on the Mount. What did He say? He said that the Scribes and the Pharisees were those who loosened the law in order to attain it. It’s ironic that now He says this. Do you want something small and narrow? Here it is.

So the contrast is very striking as to what He critiques in the Scribes and the Pharisees, and what He presents at the end of the sermon. Any others? Yes?

Participant: Jesus said, *“When the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed.”*

Participant: Amen.

Participant: I don’t think the sinner really even knows how burdened he is before he comes to Christ.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And he experiences that freedom he’s been longing for.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. And isn’t it funny? When you meet somebody that’s caught up in that cycle of sin, that pattern of living, they don’t even recognize that there’s an outside world, you know?

Participant: It’s true.

Participant: Don had his hand up.

Jeff: Oh. Sorry, Don.

Don: It reminds me of 1 John. I believe it’s chapter 5 where it says that *“His commandments are not burdensome.”*

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Jeff: Yes.

Don: For the believer, that’s true, only for the believer.

Jeff: Yes?

Participant: We have to recognize that we’re the elect of God.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And that Christ died for us. You know, it says, “*Who shall lay any charge against God’s elect? It is Christ who died.*”

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And as long as we keep that ever in our minds, and understand that it’s narrow. But, as you said with the “Dr. Who” example, it’s really (*unclear*) once you get inside, because you know what? Your burden becomes lighter because you lean more on Him.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And you don’t lean on yourself, which is what I think brother Bill was saying.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: You know, you’ve got to lean on Christ, because you know what? You can’t do it by yourself.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. And if you think about it, jump to Romans chapter 6. And I’ve said this to you before when we went through the *Devoted to God* book. We talked about how sanctification really begins with the renewal of the mind. And you think about chapter 6, where it says *consider, believe, know*. Again, there’s a battle being waged in the mind that’s crucial. And the only way that battle is waged in the mind is because there’s a conversion that has been experienced by way of regeneration. And when that regeneration takes place, then the person is no longer in that pattern and can see that at least there’s something outside of it.

Okay. Well let’s look at *the false teacher*. There are two teachers here. One is bad, one is good. His focus is on the bad. The teacher stands at the head of the narrow way. And it says beware of him. Be on guard. Defend against him.

You know, there are some interesting words that are used. We have one word, and oftentimes a range of meanings in that word. And so it’s translated in different ways in different places in the Scriptures. *Pay attention to* is another way in which this word is described.

Another way is in 1 Timothy 3:8. And it’s described as *to be addicted to*. In other words, we’re to give our attention to this in the same way that somebody might do it who is doing something unhealthy. But we are to beware, to be on guard, to give our attention to it.

I want you to notice something, and this is just structural. You know, the idea of salt and light. We’re going to look at the false teacher here, who has lost his saltiness. And remember what I said about that. I said that if one’s salt loses its saltiness, it’s not good for anything. And I said, you know, that it’s interesting. It actually says that if one’s salt loses its saltiness, it becomes moronic. And I said that if you think about that in terms of

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wisdom, if one’s wisdom becomes unwise, it becomes moronic, right? That makes sense. And Jesus is talking about the wisdom of the gospel.

And then *light* is works. Well isn’t it interesting that we have a false teacher and a false professor. The false teacher has lost salt in his message. He’s lost the wisdom of the gospel in his message. And the false professor, the false Christian, is described as *unrighteous*, lacking in righteousness, practicing unrighteousness, and therefore has no light.

So again, it’s interesting how you can bring things from the beginning of the sermon—salt and light; this is what you’re to be, wise in the gospel and well-doing because of the gospel. Take it to the end, and now you see a teacher who doesn’t have salt and a professor who doesn’t have light. So again, I’m just trying to help you to see some structure to this.

First, *the teacher*. We are to beware of the false teacher. Now this comes from Irenaeus. I realize that’s small, so let me read it. Irenaeus was a second-century pastor and theologian. And this is what he says. He says this. “*Error indeed is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest being thus exposed it should be at once detected. It is craftily decked out in attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced, more true than truth itself.*”

Now here’s what I’d say to you. You are not going to have someone walk into your church with a booze bottle opened and lottery tickets in his hand going, “I want to teach! Let me teach!” And you’re going to say, “Oh yeah, come on up!”

No, no, no! The guy that walks into your church is going to be all dressed—

Participant: C’mon!

Jeff: Hair dressed well. And he’s going to be able to talk the talk and make it sound really good and orthodox.

And this is why there needs to be discernment. Why is it that we need to beware, to pay attention to, to be so addicted to what’s being said about things about the faith? So that we can discern who is true and who is false.

And do you know what our problem is? Our problem is that that kind of stuff just falls on deaf ears, because all you have to do is turn on Christian television. And Christian television has a world of heresy being taught on it. And we go, “Oh, it’s just so and so.” And we don’t have any sort of indignancy to the fact that that’s falsehood being taught, right? You know, we’ve lost that sense.

Remember June 2015? I think that was the year that homosexual marriage became a civil right. And there was a pastor at that time featured in *Time* magazine. And the story was how he led his congregation into accepting homosexual marriage within the church.

And this is what he said. He preached on Luke 24. And after he got done, he said this. He said, “You see, here’s what happened.” He said that once Jesus disappeared, the disciples saw that it was Jesus. And this is what he said. He said, “*Brothers and sisters, we need to lift our eyes from the Bible. And once we lift them from the Bible, we will be able to see Jesus in our brothers and sisters who are gay and lesbian.*”

Participant: Oh my gosh!

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Jeff: That’s what he said. And I have a quote from him coming up. But how do you characterize narrow and small? And how do you recognize when narrow and small is not in the message of the false teacher? Because there is no narrow and small in the message of the false teacher.

Participant: Amen.

Jeff: Yes?

Participant: Today I myself, and probably everybody here, more and more we watch TV. And they’re shoving it down our throats.

Jeff: Sure.

Participant: You see two girls kissing, and men holding hands, or something like that. And I’m thinking to myself that they’re pushing products down your throat. And even on TV it’s so serious. They just keep doing it more and more. I mean, I just might as well blow the TV up.

Jeff: Listen to this quote. This is from that sermon in the 2015 *Time* magazine article. “*Full privileges are extended now to you*”, meaning homosexuals and their partners, “*with the same expectations of faithfulness, sobriety, holiness, wholeness and fidelity, godliness, skill and willingness, that is expected of all. Full membership means being able to serve in leadership and to give all of your gifts, and to receive all of the sacraments—not only Communion and Baptism, but child dedication and marriage and ordination.*”

Participant: How can holiness—

Jeff: Well, yes. Don’t ask those kinds of questions. (*Laughter*) The fact that you’re asking it indicates that you know the answer already. (*Laughter*) Yes?

Participant: You can see a lot of theological terms right there.

Jeff: You can. A lot of good theological terms, right? How do you recognize it? You recognize it because there is no small or narrow way in that at all.

Participant: I think the word we should use is *desensitized*. That is the word.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: We’ve become desensitized as a country.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: And what we’ve done is that those things that were uncommon are common. And those things that were uncommon have now become common.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Participant: And what we do is that we become accepted. He said to live in the world, but not to be of the world. What we’ve got to do is we’ve got to stand up against wrong. And wrong is very wrong.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. Well, this ministry produces rotten fruit. I don’t think I need to convince you of that.

Let’s talk about *the false professor* for a minute. What do they claim? They claim, “*Lord, Lord!*”

Now I want you to think about “*Lord, Lord*” as it is used in the Scriptures. God calls on Abraham. “*Abraham, Abraham!*” He calls on Jacob. “*Jacob, Jacob!*” Remember the story where Samuel is called. “*Samuel, Samuel!*” Remember Matthew 25, the parable of

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the virgins. “*Lord, Lord, open up to us!*” Remember Jesus on the cross. “*My God, My God!*”

Remember that the doubling of the name indicates intimacy of relationship. “I know you” is what’s being said there.

Now what’s being said in this situation is, “Lord, Lord, we know You.” Matthew 25: “Lord, Lord, open up! We know You.” That is what’s being communicated there. The doubling of the name indicates intimacy of relationship. That’s what their saying. We know You. So that’s the way we ought to think about the judgment that we’re seeing here on the last day.

They have another claim. “We’ve prophesied.” Now it’s not clear whether they’re foretelling or forth-telling. I mean it’s not clear whether it’s “we’ve told the future,” or “we’ve taken Your word and preached it.” “Demons, we’ve driven them out. Miracles, we’ve performed them. Our lives have been characterized by radical gifts.”

I want you to know something. They’ve done these things in the Name. These things are not bad. But notice this. These things are outside of the realm of the sermon that we’ve been looking at, aren’t they? Jesus asks in this sermon for quiet, unflappable obedience from those who have been destitute of righteousness, but who are now righteous in the Lord. That’s what He’s asking for.

It’s really interesting that these folks characterize their lives not in terms of what we’ve been looking at in terms of The Sermon on the Mount, loving neighbor and loving God. But they’ve been characterizing their lives in terms of gifts. These are the gifts that we’ve been practicing. And they’re not bad.

But I want to tell you something. Jesus says, “You practice lawlessness.” He is using the standard of the sermon in order to judge them.

And what has the sermon been taken up with? Righteousness. You practice righteousness. Here, do it this way. These are righteous things to do. All of a sudden, we meet somebody who is practicing unrighteousness, lawlessness.

And yet they claim to have intimacy with God. Their lives are characterized by the gifts that they’ve claimed to receive.

And this shouldn’t be a surprise to us, should it? It should not be a surprise to us. Why? Because we see this very thing in 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians they put their emphasis on the gifts rather than the Giver.

But we need to go back and find once again in the Beatitudes where we ought to place our trust. We remember what? That we were poor and humble, right? And we were crying out for righteousness, a righteousness that we did not have.

And we were filled with righteousness. Remember, Jesus does all things to fulfill righteousness. And then later, in chapters 8 and 9, it says, “I didn’t come for those who are healthy. I came for those who need righteousness.”

And so the idea then is that we are not to go before God saying, “You know, God, I know you. And man, look at my life! My life—whew! I’ve really—yeah!” (*Laughter*) Because He’s going to say what? “Yeah, you’re missing it. You missed it.”

Okay. So any questions on that? I realize that we’re flying through a lot of things we could take time on. Don, go ahead.

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Don: Okay. I’m sure that we all, and I, have had trouble with this passage. How do I know I’m not one of them? It’s a scary passage, you know? How am I to know that I’m not one of those that one day Jesus will say, *“I never knew you!”*?

Jeff: Here’s what I’d say, Don. I think the reason why Jesus says that is in the text. And I think what He’s saying, the picture that’s being communicated, is that these people are placing their profession of knowledge squarely on the gifts they practiced, and not squarely upon the fact that they received righteousness and practiced it.

So let me put it this way. So we’ve been talking about being justified, or having the righteousness of Christ that He supplies, and out of that living the life of holiness and righteousness. Both of those things are what we’ve talked about in the twofold grace of God. You can’t possess one without the other. So there’s righteousness, and then there’s the practice of righteousness.

These people step outside of that and say, “There’s a giftedness that I have that you need to take note of, God.” And I think that’s where the difference comes in.

You’re doing that, right? And you know, that can happen so subtly. And that’s why I think it’s here.

You know, people aren’t going to recognize you doing that from the outside. You’re going to recognize that.

Let me just say this to you. I’ve got a friend who plays professionally in the Argentina Symphony. And here’s what she told me. She said, “If I miss a day of practice, I notice it.” She said, “If I miss two days of practice, those closest to me who have the same kind of knowledge notice it. And if I miss three days, that’s when the audience begins to notice it,” right?

Participant: Right.

Jeff: And so you may be the only one that notices, right? But you notice. And you have to deal with yourself rigorously. That’s what I think the *paucitus salvandorum* indicates. Yes?

Participant: Would you say that it’s like the difference between Catholic versus Protestant in this way? Hey, I’m righteous! Look how good I am! Look at all that I’ve done! Therefore, You should let Me in. Lord, Lord, You should know me because of all of my worth! Versus because of Christ, because of what You’ve done, I am doing these works and I rely on that. Would that be a good analogy?

Jeff: I think there’s an analogy there, yes. I think there’s an analogy between the whole works based orientation of a person and grace based. Yes. Yes?

Participant: Isn’t that going back to the two fruits? It’s the fruit that Christ produces in you, and therefore I do that and I feel good.

Jeff: Yes.

Participant: I’m doing this for the Lord.

Jeff: Yes. The fruit I’m producing is what Christ produces in me. But is it Christ-produced fruit in me? Yes, Sig?

Sig: Jeff, I know it’s toward the end of our time. But one thing that helped me with this passage was when a theologian was looking at it as Christ talking more specifically to the teachers of the law, the Jews of His time, saying, “When did you do this?” What He

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was really saying to them is, “You haven’t held up to the law. You haven’t done the things you were called to do.” He’s not talking to Don Maurer, although I think that now, because of what we know because Christ is risen, Christ is the Messiah, it may be different. But at that point in time, wasn’t this sermon directed more to the Jews?

Jeff: I think you’re absolutely right. I think that the whole of 5:17-20 indicates that the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees, though it looked like righteousness, wasn’t righteousness at all. And so I think that you can take a direct link from this—you who practice unrighteousness—and tie it back to the Scribes and the Pharisees. Where I think that we have to examine ourselves is that all of us have a Scribe and a Pharisee living inside of us. That’s the kind of—

Participant: Not just Don?

Jeff: Yes, not just Don. (*Laughter*) Let me just say this really quickly. What’s the difference between the two foundations? I’ll tell you what it is. It is “*these words of Mine.*” And this goes back to what you just said, Sig. That’s a contrast between Jesus’ words and the words of the Scribes and the Pharisees. So it’s back and forth.

And I just want to leave you with this. The question is, are you frightened by this? And I think that when we look at this in light of the *paucitus salvandorum*, I think that there’s a sense in which we ought all to be a little bit uncomfortable by this.

But here’s the point that I’d say to you. D. A. Carson says this. He says, Look. If I came to your door and told you that there were flood waters rising and said to you, “Hey, there are flood waters rising! You need to get your family and leave!”, would you say to that person, would you say to me if I came to your door, “You’re frightening me! Now stop it!”? (*Laughter*) Or would you say, “Okay. Let me grab my things.”?

And so the idea of this is that Jesus is saying, “*Strive to enter through the narrow gate*” not because you are working for your salvation, but because of all that we’ve talked about. So get your things and let’s go! That’s the idea.

Okay, let’s pray briefly. Father in heaven, thank You for this day and for the time that You’ve given to us. Lord, bless to us Your word, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Men: Amen. Thank you. (*Applause*)