

## **Matthew's Gospel chapter 7 Life Skills**

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.  
English Standard Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

### **Introduction**

Welcome to our Truth for Today talk on Matthew's Gospel chapter 7, Life Skills. This is the third and final chapter of the Lord's Sermon on the Mount and covers much that is practical. We will look at the chapter under nine headings, as follows.

1. Warnings about being judgmental, vv.1-5
2. Dogs and pigs, v.6
3. Encouragement to pray, vv.7-9
4. Application to me, v.12
5. Two ways, vv.13-14
6. Look out, false teachers about! vv.15-20
7. Profession without reality, vv.21-23
8. Two builders, vv.24-27
9. The impact of the Lord's teaching, vv.28-29

Scriptures quoted will be from the English Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

### **Warnings about being judgmental, vv.1-5**

Let us read these verses,

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment, you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye” (Matthew 7:1-5).

How easy it is to see faults in someone else but not in ourselves. The Lord contrasts the speck with a log showing how in judging others we have imperfect eyesight. There is a need to remove the log before we can go around seeking to remove a speck of dirt from a fellow believer's eye. If we persist in this critical attitude, we will come up against the Lord's assessment of our lives and as we have judged others there will be a corresponding judgment placed upon us. We are not expected to take the Lord's place in making judgement upon other believers. However, in the assembly there are things that we, as responsible believers, should judge. For example in 1 Corinthians 5, sexual immoral behaviour in the local church.

## **Dogs and pigs, v.6**

Let us read this next verse,

“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you” (Matthew 7:6).

There are things associated with the Christian life that are both holy and precious, these are the result of Salvation. The Lord, in using the terminology of dogs and pigs, gives us a word picture to describe those that have no appreciation of what is good and wholesome. Those who are unsaved do not appreciate the divine blessings that have reached believers when they received salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Dogs were scavengers and pigs unclean to the Jewish people. Both animals were useful in clearing up unwanted waste food. The food that would go on the table at mealtimes to feed the family, would not be initially put out for the dogs and pigs, it was always the leftovers unwanted scraps. Dogs and pigs would not distinguish between what was for the table and what was for the scrap bin.

There is a pathway through this world that is holy, separate unto God, seeking to be undefiled with the world. Pearls are the precious truths gained through the death of Christ which are only true of those who know and have trusted the Saviour. The person who is unsaved needs to hear the Gospel message of how to be saved before being brought into the need for baptism and remembering the Saviour in His death, to name but two precious blessings.

## **Encouragement to pray, vv.7-11**

Let us read these verses,

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:7-11).

These few verses give encouragement to pray. In verse 7, there is a persistence in prayer with the words, “ask”, “seek”, and “knock.” Verse 8 informs us that there will be a response to such persistence, “receives”, “finds”, and the door is “opened.”

Ask equates to what we find in the ‘Lord’s Prayer’, “Give us this day our daily bread.” The basic needs of life are something many persecuted Christians desire. It is not a selfish request it is what the Lord taught in that wonderful example of how to pray.

To seek may be considered a more persistent prayer, but this assumes we are seeking in the right way - according to the will of God, and then we will find what is being sought after. This can be applied to different areas of our lives, which may be family or work related. Also, answers to a problem that we are having regarding a scripture passage we are reading, and so forth.

To knock may be considered as not only persistent, but an extremely urgent prayer. We find this illustrated by Peter when, having taken his eyes off the Lord while walking on the water, he begins to sink. “Lord, save me”, was his cry, a very short prayer which needed an immediate answer.

The Lord then illustrates in vv.9-11, how earthly fathers give good things to their sons. They do not give a stone or a serpent, when bread or fish is being requested. How much more will our

heavenly Father give good things to those that ask Him. A believer has a rich resource in their heavenly Father, there is no lack - only an abundance that is available for the asking.

### **Application to me, v.12**

Let us read this verse,

“So, whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

There is a basic principle in this verse; how you would like people to treat you, that you should correspondingly treat them. If you treat others badly, then do not be surprised if they respond in like manner. However, as Christians, we know that our kindness to others is not always reciprocated. This does not give us the right to be unkind in return, as we find in 1 Peter 3:17.

“For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil” (1Peter 3:17).

It is not in our hands to correct wrongs done to ourselves; we leave that to the One who judges righteously. The Law states that we are to love our neighbours as summarised by the lawyer and verified by the Lord Jesus in Luke 10:27.

“And [the lawyer] answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself”” (Luke 10:27).

This is supported by the Old Testament Scripture, Leviticus 19:18.

“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:18).

Also to the Prophets we find the thought of love, although not explicitly stated, in Zechariah 8:16-17.

“These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD” (Zechariah 8:16-17).

In the Old Testament, the Scriptures were very much focused upon God’s earthly people. How they were to relate to one another. When we come to the New Testament, God’s thoughts are wider and consider the whole world in relation to Salvation for the lost. Also, in the local fellowships we love fellow believers because they are part of the family of God, redeemed by Christ Jesus.

### **Two ways, vv.13-14**

Let us read these verses,

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Matthew 7:13-14).

At the front of our house, we have a small gate next to a double five bar gate. The double gate is to allow cars to come onto the parking area. The small gate is for easy access by people, the postman in particular. This is not a picture of the above verses because both gates are easy to find. Also, the two gates have different functions.

Let us consider the narrow gate and ask the questions: 'Why is it described as narrow?' 'Why is the way hard?', and, 'Why are there few who find it?' The answers hinges upon the fact that the narrow gate leads to life. What can the Lord mean by this? This is a new kind of life that comes through accepting the Lord Jesus as Saviour. It has some preconditions: accepting that we are sinners, repenting of our lost condition, and seeing in Jesus that He is the only way for our sins to be forgiven, and for us to be right with a holy, yet loving God. This is what Jesus was meaning by the gate being narrow, the way being hard and that only a few are willing to come God's way into blessing.

People do not like the idea of being sinners. They think of themselves as good as, if not better than, the next person. Why is this? It is mainly because the world has lost sight of there being a God who is holy. They reject this fact in their minds and, as a result, they reckon there is no accountability to Him. So, they are not looking for the 'narrow gate', which is Jesus, who brings Salvation to those who repent.

In contrast, the wide gate needs no soul searching and the way is easy, because there is no challenge to heart and conscience. We can live our lives how we please, giving no thought to God and His claims over us as Creator. It takes no effort, it is like being on a slide, but Jesus states it leads to destruction. Because it takes no soul-searching before a Holy God, it is liked by many. The wideness of this gate accommodates people of every persuasion that leaves the one true God out of the picture.

### **Look out, false teachers about! vv.15-20**

Let us read these verses,

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, you will recognize them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:15-20).

The Lord Jesus taught there are two features which characterised these false teachers. First, they come among God's people in disguise; and secondly, the fruit of their teaching is bad and diseased. Such false teachers want to be accepted among the people of God by their plausible teaching, but their intent is only to cause damage among God's children.

The Jewish people would be well aware of false prophets and teachers, as many of their sacred Scriptures gave warning about them. Jeremiah being an example of God warning His people.

"Then I said: "Ah, Lord GOD, behold, the prophets say to them, 'You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured peace in this place.'" And the LORD said to me: "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds. Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who prophesy

in my name although I did not send them, and who say, 'Sword and famine shall not come upon this land': By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and sword, with none to bury them—their wives, their sons, and their daughters. For I will pour out their evil upon them” (Jeremiah 14:13-16).

We see in this Scripture the prophets falsely taught that God's judgment would not fall upon the people, but God reaffirms His message to the people that His judgment will come, and this people will perish. We have the same kind of warnings given by the Apostle Paul for Christians as Jeremiah did for Israel. There will be attacks from outside the Christian company, as well as false teachers from within. Both are intent on breaking up the Christian company and damaging the testimony. So, we see that these dangers started in the days of the apostles and have continued to this day.

“I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:29-32).

As to fruits that are diseased or bad, they are the results of those that lead people away from the Lord Jesus Christ or seek to mingle Judaism with Christianity (just as in the previous dispensation, when the false prophets mingled the worship of pagan gods with that required by the One true God).

### **Profession without reality, vv.21-23**

Let us read these verses,

“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. 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?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness” (Matthew 7:21-23).

At first reading, these verses may seem strange as we find people who have prophesied, cast out demons, and done many mighty works, in the Lord's name, but the Lord rejects them. We must ask the question, 'Why?' Let us quote from Luke 9:1-2,

“And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.”

Here we have the source of power for the disciples, it was not in themselves, but given by the Lord. Let us notice that Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve, but we know from subsequent actions by him that he was not a true believer. We can then understand that, in our verses from Matthew 7, the Lord knows the heart and no amount of pleading will enable entrance into the kingdom for anyone with whom there is no reality. This is a challenge to everyone professing to be a Christian. Has there ever been a real living link to the Saviour? We have the same challenge

from the parable of the ten virgins, of whom five were wise and five were foolish. The five wise went into the marriage celebrations and five foolish were left outside. The wise had oil with them for their lamps but the foolish had no oil. The oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit who all true Christians have received. Read Matthew 25:1-13.

### **Two builders, vv.24-27**

We will read these verses,

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 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. 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. 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” (Matthew 7:24-27).

Recession or no recession, pandemic or no pandemic, one thing that does not change, builders are at work. We had some work done recently in our house, during the recent Covid pandemic, and the builder had never stopped work. He was as busy as ever, as long as masks and social distancing were observed.

In our above verses we have two builders, but there was a distinction between the builders. One was wise and one was foolish. Whether or not there were building regulations, I am not sure, but the wise builder knew he had to establish his house on a solid foundation. He built his house on a rock foundation. When adverse weather conditions came his house stood firm. In contrast the foolish builder did not look for a solid base but set up his house on sand. The same adverse weather conditions came and no doubt to his horror the rain and floods washed the sand away and the house fell.

Now this little story, which is easily understood, is a picture of something far more serious. The Lord commences these verses with, “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man.” This person stands firm when life’s difficulties come because he has listened to the Lord’s words, he lives by them. This is true for salvation, but it is also true for living the Christian life. The wise person is contrasted with the other person who hears the Lord’s words and ignores the advice; the Lord considers that person foolish. In the storms of life such a person has no foundation to withstand the trials and pressures of life. This picture is true for those who ignore the Salvation found only by believing in Jesus; but also for the Christian who ignores the teaching on how to live as a true follower of Jesus. It is disastrous in both cases, one more so than the other!

### **The impact of the Lord’s teaching, vv.28-29**

Let us read the closing verses of the chapter,

“And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29).

This is the end of the three chapters known as the Sermon on the Mount. The initial impact upon the crowd was astonishment at the Lord’s teaching. It would be reasonable to assume that they had never heard anything like this before as the Lord Jesus covered several topics, which were probably never taken up by the scribes. In addition, they recognised that the Lord spoke with authority unlike the scribes. This was a sad reflection on the scribes who may have regarded their role like any other employment, it had no real conviction in their own lives.

This reminds me of an incident in John chapter 7. We will read a few verses,

“Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, “When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?” The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him” (John 7:31-32).

“The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why did you not bring him?” The officers answered, “No one ever spoke like this man!”” (John 7:45-46).

The Lord Jesus was once again speaking to the people, and this angered the rulers, who sent officers to apprehend Him. But it appears that when they came to Jesus, His teaching caused them to ignore their mission. As the officers reported back, and in answer to why they had not fulfilled their duty their only defence was, “No one ever spoke like this man!” So, again we see an amazing testimony to the words of the Lord Jesus, their power and authority. This is also true about the whole of the Bible because it is God’s inspired word, there is no other book like it.

May the Lord Jesus bless you in your service that you undertake for the Lord’s glory and that you be preserved day by day from the attacks of Satan. Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on The Gospel of Matthew chapter 7, Life Skills, talk number T1284.

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