

14. Simple Commands to follow serious warnings

10/26/2003

"I'd like to buy \$3.00 worth of God, please. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough for me to feel good as I do my religious duty and to get some brownie points from whoever God is for rainy day.

I'd like to buy \$3.00 worth of God, please. Not enough to change my lifestyle, but just enough to know that I have a ticket to heaven in case I die. I'd like to live here forever, you know? I don't want God to tell me how to live, I don't want Him to tell me stop going see 'R' rated movies, stop drinking, stop smoking, stop snorting, or stop sleeping with women whose name I don't know. I just want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack.

I'd like to buy \$3.00 worth of God, please. No, no, not the flesh and blood one, Jesus they talk about. They say He is the only way, but that is a narrow minded religion. I will have a plastic cross on my dash board, I will even wear it around my neck as a good luck charm.

I'd like to buy \$3.00 worth of God, please."

That is the view of the world regarding religion and Christianity.

Religions are doomed to fail, because it is impossible for puny finite man to reach an awesome infinite God. We just can't do it. Religions always leave man with a feeling of emptiness and condemnation which is from the devil.

Religions would have us reaching out to touch God, but Christianity has God reaching out to touch us. Religion demands us to do something, but Jesus says, "Done!" There is the vast difference. Finite man could never reach or touch an infinite God, but it is no problem for an infinite God to reach a finite man.

A. A STRONG REPROOF

Jesus doesn't just tinker around here and there with our lives. He doesn't suggest some minor moral tune-up. He says that we need a complete overhaul. We must either declare our allegiance to Him or decide not to follow Him. There's no middle ground. He puts these "either/or" decisions in front of us in several sets of alternatives: two paths, two trees, and two claims.

B. TWO PATHS

Matthew 7:13-14 "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 which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Look at the contrasting adjectives in those two verses: narrow and wide, small and broad, few and many. It seems that the broad way is so much more popular by the majority! People think that there is safety in numbers. What a false security!

The broad path, the broad gate, it's the way of the world. The broad way—where nothing must be obeyed and nothing must be believed—leads to destruction.

Proverbs 16:25 There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

The narrow way, on the other hand, leads to life. And that narrow way is Jesus Christ.

John 10:9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

C. TWO TREES

Nothing is more unpopular than someone laying out narrow roads for other people to follow. We don't like that. We like breathing room. We like to stretch. We don't want someone crowding us. We like opinion polls, surveys with multiple choices.

But Jesus isn't the type to hand out questionnaires to get a popular consensus on the issues. Do you know who does? False teachers. Let's hear what Jesus says:

Matthew 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

These false teachers outwardly appear to be just one of the flock. Inwardly, though, they are wolves. They are deceptive and dangerous. Their beauty is only fleece deep, but their brutality runs much deeper.

It is in the nature of these false prophets to deceive and deny their true character. Often they deceive even themselves, believing themselves to be sheep when in fact they are vicious wolves.

Matthew 7:16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?

In verse 16 Jesus changes from the analogy of what a sheep wears to what a tree bears. A wolf may be able to disguise itself, but a tree cannot.

We must guard ourselves against false prophets by taking heed to their fruits. This means paying attention to many aspects of their life and ministry.

1) We should pay attention to the manner of living a teacher shows.

Do they show righteousness, humility and faithfulness in the way they live?

2) We should pay attention to the content of their teaching.

Is it true fruit from God's Word, or is it man-centered, appealing to ears that want to be tickled?

2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

3) We should pay attention to the effect of their teaching.

Are people growing in Jesus or merely being entertained, and eventually falling away? False prophets are the henchmen of the devil. Because they make people to stumble.

Matthew 7:17-20 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.

This fruit is the inevitable result of who we are. Eventually—though it may take a time for the harvest to come—the good or bad fruit is evident, revealing what sort of “tree” we are.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

D. TWO CLAIMS

While Matthew 7:15-20 deals with false teachers, verses 21-23 deal with false followers – an equally unpopular subject:

Matthew 7:21-23 “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!’

Did you notice that Jesus freely claims He will be the one people must stand before on that final day of judgment, and He is the One who is rightly called Lord.

The people Jesus speaks of here have impressive spiritual accomplishments. They have prophesied, cast out demons, and have done many wonders. These are wonderful things, but they mean nothing without true fellowship.

Jesus does not seem to doubt their claims of doing the miraculous. He doesn’t say, “You didn’t really prophesy or cast out demons or do miracles.” This leads us to understand that sometimes miracles are granted through pretended believers, reminding us that in the final analysis, miracles prove nothing. Remember, we find the devil will perform miracles during the time of tribulation in the Book of Revelation.

Titus 1:16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

Significantly, they even did these things in the name of Jesus. Yet, they never really had a relationship of love and fellowship with Jesus.

These are not people who lost their salvation. Rather, they never truly had it. See what Jesus said to them, “I never knew you.”

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Only one Gate leads to eternal life with God.

Jehovah’s Witness people and Mormon people also claim that they were saved by the grace of God and Jesus is a son of God. But they will deny the fact of the deity of Jesus Christ. That is the common denominator of the all the cults. But Jesus is the only way to get to the Father and there is no plan B.

2) Only one kind of Teacher deserves to be followed.

Anyone can claim that they receive special revelations from God that are not in the Word of God. Please remember this, our Word of God is complete, it doesn’t need additional comments from some weasels.

Jeremiah 14:14 And the Lord said to me, “The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

3) Only one kind of person can have assurance of eternal life with God.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

And it forces us to ask ourselves: Have I chosen the right way? Does my tree bear good fruit? Is the faith I claim evidenced in my deeds?

If the answer to these questions is, "No," you're lost. That's the simple, hard truth. And not a very pleasant one to hear. But it's better you hear it now than when you stand before the King, pleading, "Lord, Lord...," and He says, "I never knew you; depart from Me."