

Choices & Consequences – Matthew 7:13-29 (BCCC ELS 23/11/03)

INTRODUCTION:

We have seen some amazing and famous words so far in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew Chs 5-7):

- The Beatitudes of Ch 5 vv 1-12
- “You are the salt of the earth” (5:13)
- The Lord’s prayer (6:9-13)
- “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (6:33)
- “Ask and it shall be given onto you, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened to you” (7:7)

In this passage Jesus presents us with 3 choices with 3 different consequences:

- 1) **Choice of a gate and road** – consequence = life or destruction
- 2) **Choice of a teacher** – consequence = truth or deception
- 3) **Choice of a foundation** – consequence = lasting or collapsing

A] CHOICE OF ROADS

The idea of two roads was common in Jewish thought, BUT the two gates are a new addition by Jesus

NOTE it is NOT a road leading to a gate BUT a gate entering onto a road

The gate is narrow contrasted with a “broad minded” (pluralistic) society OR a multi-faith OR universalistic approach

Luke 13:24, a parallel passage, says “make every effort to enter in”. How seriously will you take this challenge from Christ?

John Stott – “*I remember how puzzled, even indignant, I was when it was first suggested to me that I needed to appropriate Christ and His salvation for myself. Thank God, I came to see that, though an acknowledgement that I needed a Saviour was good, and a belief that Christ was **the** Saviour of the world was better, best of all was a personal acceptance of Him as **my** Saviour.*”

B] CHOICE OF TEACHERS

False teachers are to be expected – they may appear to be right at first (wolves in sheep’s clothing)

How can we identify a false teacher? We could consider their:

- a) *Doctrine* – do they teach Biblical truth? BUT this is not enough of a test – many say “lord, lord”
- b) *Dramatic service* – BUT false teachers may even perform miracles in Jesus’ name

The determinant factor = obedience (v21) in relationship to Christ (v23)

The ultimate test is their fruit [do they honour Christ and display Christian character, bringing people closer to Christ?]

Notice claim of Christ – He is Lord & He presides @ judgement

We need to confront these claims of Christ – otherwise we could be preaching “cheap grace”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (in *Cost of Discipleship*) “*Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ living and incarnate*”

C] CHOICE OF FOUNDATION

This choice is not primarily about conversion BUT about how we continue to live in Christ

The foundation = all the words of Christ – His challenge to our priorities (5:3-12), impact on world (5:13-16), idea of righteousness and Law (5:17-20), murder/hatred (5:21-26), adultery / divorce (5:27-32), oaths / truth (5:33-37), love and revenge (5:38-48), giving (6:1-4), prayer (6:5-15), fasting (6:16-18), materialism (6:19-34), judging (7:1-6), relationship with God and others (7:7-12)

This parable has four key lessons:

- 1) Our response to the words of Christ is vital
- 2) We need to be not just hearers but doers too
- 3) It is in life’s storms that faith comes into its own
- 4) We need to keep on building on the correct foundation

THE POST-SCRIPT – JESUS’ AUTHORITY (vv28-29)

He spoke **with** authority NOT from authority (as the scribes did, and as I do) – He is the author, not the interpreter!

It is no surprise that they notice a different authority in His teaching when compared scribes in view of the claims He has made about His unique person:

- (i) Persecution in His name is blessing (5:11)
- (ii) He fulfils the Law and the Prophets (5:17)
- (iii) He challenges the authority of rabbinical tradition (5:21f)
- (iv) He claims to be lord and to be the agent of God’s judgement (7:22)
- (v) His words are a firm foundation for life (7:24)

CHALLENGE:

So, the Sermon on the Mount is NOT just about ethics or religion, BUT about conversion and relationships.

Questions for us:

- Are you on the right road? *Conversion* [relationship with God as Father (6:9, 7:11) and with Christ as Lord (7:21-23)]
- Are you listening to the right words?
- Are you building on the right foundation? *Continuing*

- If we claim to be Christ-followers, are we **totally** committed to that Kingdom above all else in life?
- What gets you up in the morning?