

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

EXPOSITORY SERMON

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PASSING THE TEST

Scripture Reading – Matthew 5:1-7:13-28.

Introduction

In this passage of scripture, Jesus is concluding His sermon on the mount. Through out His sermon, He laid down the principles by which His followers should live. In this conclusion to this teaching, Jesus is issuing a challenge to personal responsibility. It is in fact a call to personal responsibility. There is a challenge to disciplined, discerning, decision making. There is a clear warning against self-deception. He is alerting all of us make sure that that our Christian profession is not hollow and phony, but genuine and real. Furthermore there is the exhortation to unreserved obedience to His words for His words are life. In essence, Jesus is outlining the criteria by which the Christian should judge the reality and genuineness of his or her Christian testimony. These criteria are important for two reasons. Firstly,

- i. Because it is Jesus who established the criteria. And secondly,

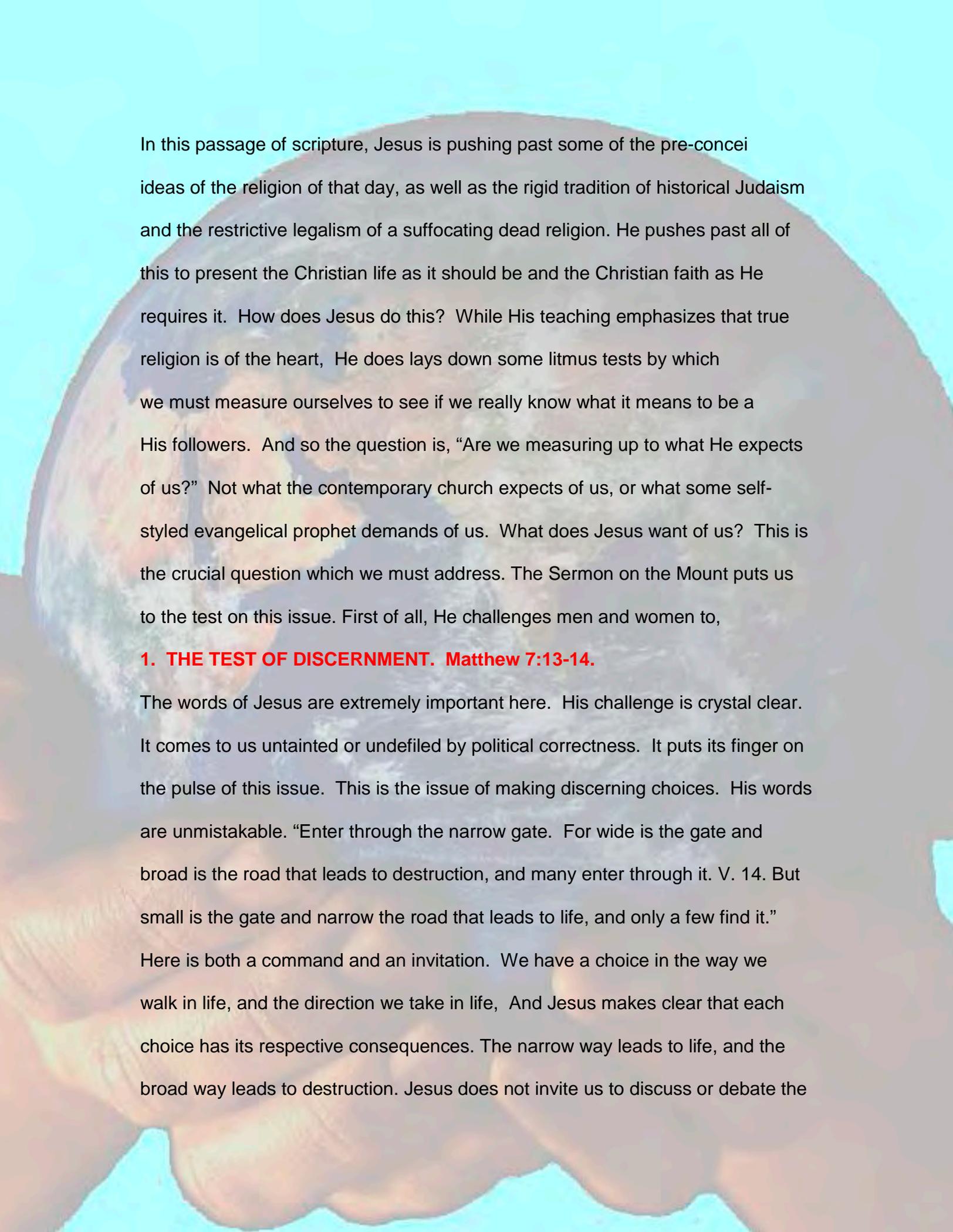
ii. ii. It is vital because so many Christians judge the genuineness of their testimony

by criteria that are not scriptural. These criteria are not rooted in the scriptures. It is important then, that we take note of the teaching of Jesus to discover the truth.

The passage of scripture we are addressing comes from the founder, the originator and source of the Christian Gospel. He is putting the spiritual condition of our lives to the test. They are not simply the words of another teacher, nor do they simply contain a new philosophy of a religious thinker.

These truths are dynamic redeeming truths that bring into the heart and life of the believer freedom from the guilt and power of sin.. The scriptures are clear on this, **“If the truth shall make you, free you will be free indeed.”** These truths are necessary to finding redemption from sin and guidance to living the holy life.

They are also vital to finding eternal life.. Jesus on one occasion said, **“The words I have spoken to you, are spirit and they are life.” John 6:63.** and again He said, **“I tell you the truth if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” John 8:51.** This man Jesus is more than a teacher, He is a redeemer who redeems the soul from the ravages of sin. He is more than a religious philosopher. He is a Savior from the guilt and consequences of sin. The promises He makes are made a personal reality by His sacrificial death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. Jesus makes real in us what He teaches us we should be. He empowers us by His Spirit to live out His teaching. It was Stanley Jones who said that He came to makes us what He teaches we should be. **“Jesus died,” said Paul, “that the righteousness of the law might be fully met in us.” Romans 8:4.**



In this passage of scripture, Jesus is pushing past some of the pre-conceived ideas of the religion of that day, as well as the rigid tradition of historical Judaism and the restrictive legalism of a suffocating dead religion. He pushes past all of this to present the Christian life as it should be and the Christian faith as He requires it. How does Jesus do this? While His teaching emphasizes that true religion is of the heart, He does lay down some litmus tests by which we must measure ourselves to see if we really know what it means to be a His followers. And so the question is, "Are we measuring up to what He expects of us?" Not what the contemporary church expects of us, or what some self-styled evangelical prophet demands of us. What does Jesus want of us? This is the crucial question which we must address. The Sermon on the Mount puts us to the test on this issue. First of all, He challenges men and women to,

1. THE TEST OF DISCERNMENT. Matthew 7:13-14.

The words of Jesus are extremely important here. His challenge is crystal clear. It comes to us untainted or undefiled by political correctness. It puts its finger on the pulse of this issue. This is the issue of making discerning choices. His words are unmistakable. "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. V. 14. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." Here is both a command and an invitation. We have a choice in the way we walk in life, and the direction we take in life, And Jesus makes clear that each choice has its respective consequences. The narrow way leads to life, and the broad way leads to destruction. Jesus does not invite us to discuss or debate the

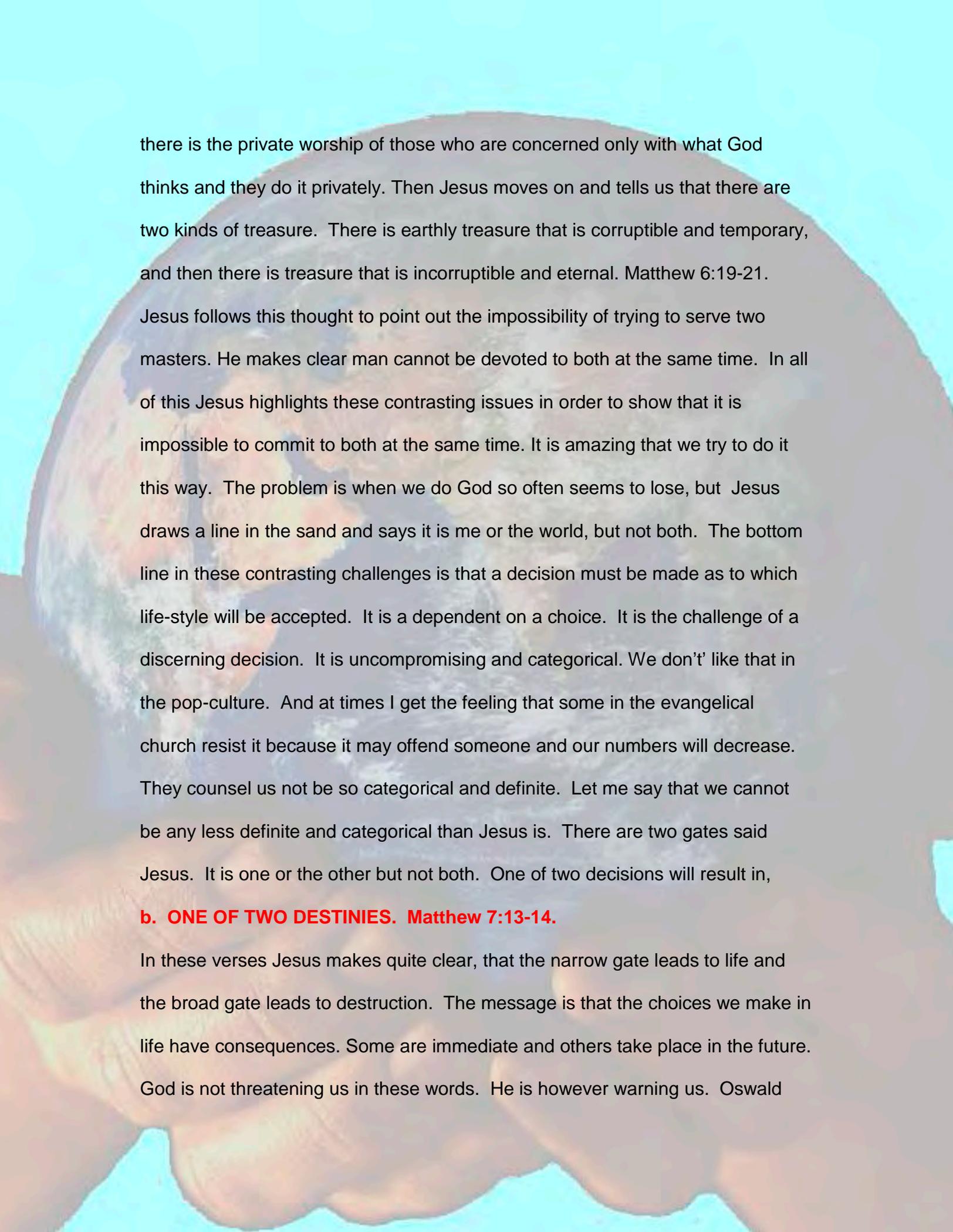
merits of this challenge. He simply says this is the way it is. Take it or leave it.

There is no neutral or middle ground here. And so Jesus is talking about making,

a. ONE OF TWO DECISIONS IN LIFE. Matthew 6: 5-7,16-18.7:13-14.

The decisions are extremely crucial. They direct our lifestyle on earth – they decide our direction in life – they determine our destiny at the end of life.

That is why the choices we make must show discernment. They should be based on eternal values and not self-will and self-gratification. Up to this point in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus takes the truths or the principles of His Kingdom and place one against those of the world and even the religion of that day, so that he could show how they differ from one another. And He does so, so that we can make intelligent and discerning decisions about our direction and destiny in life. For instance He shows the difference between two types of righteousness. In Matthew 5:20. There is the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees that is legalistic and a phony righteousness – and then there is the righteousness that surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees. Jesus makes it clear that unless we possess the righteousness that surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees we will not inherit eternal life. This is the righteousness of the heart and life. Jesus then continues to show the distinction between two types of worship. Matthew 6:5-7, 16-18. There is the worship that is designed to impress the spectator. This constitutes street corner praying using meaningless vain repetitions, and Jesus warns us against this because this is what the pagans do. We do it in some of our contemporary songs. Then they disfigure their faces to indicate how holy they are in their fasting. This is spectator worship. Then



there is the private worship of those who are concerned only with what God thinks and they do it privately. Then Jesus moves on and tells us that there are two kinds of treasure. There is earthly treasure that is corruptible and temporary, and then there is treasure that is incorruptible and eternal. Matthew 6:19-21. Jesus follows this thought to point out the impossibility of trying to serve two masters. He makes clear man cannot be devoted to both at the same time. In all of this Jesus highlights these contrasting issues in order to show that it is impossible to commit to both at the same time. It is amazing that we try to do it this way. The problem is when we do God so often seems to lose, but Jesus draws a line in the sand and says it is me or the world, but not both. The bottom line in these contrasting challenges is that a decision must be made as to which life-style will be accepted. It is a dependent on a choice. It is the challenge of a discerning decision. It is uncompromising and categorical. We don't like that in the pop-culture. And at times I get the feeling that some in the evangelical church resist it because it may offend someone and our numbers will decrease. They counsel us not be so categorical and definite. Let me say that we cannot be any less definite and categorical than Jesus is. There are two gates said Jesus. It is one or the other but not both. One of two decisions will result in,

b. ONE OF TWO DESTINIES. Matthew 7:13-14.

In these verses Jesus makes quite clear, that the narrow gate leads to life and the broad gate leads to destruction. The message is that the choices we make in life have consequences. Some are immediate and others take place in the future. God is not threatening us in these words. He is however warning us. Oswald

Chambers makes clear that we should always distinguish between warning and threatening. A threat generally has the element of personal vindictiveness, whereas a warning is inspired by love and patience. God always warns us because He loves us. The devil never warns he always threatens. And when God places His warnings in the scriptures always read them with the Cross of Calvary in your mind. "It is the patient love of God that gives the warning." The consequence of the broad way is destruction. This is the unchangeable law of life. What we sow we reap and that is why God issues His warnings. He does so in love. The warnings of God come to us, so that we have the discernment to choose our way wisely in life. It is a matter of urgency that we do so said Jesus, because the decisions we make culminate in one of two destinies. This is the test of discernment. Then there is,

2. THE TEST OF DISTINCTIVENESS. Matthew 7:15,18- 23.

Jesus said "**By their fruit you will recognize them.**" The fruit we bear is an indicator of who we are. This why Jesus moves on from His challenge to choose one of two ways, to discuss two kinds of fruit. In these verses Jesus talks about false prophets and by implication true prophets. The analogies he uses are of a good tree and good fruit as compared with bad tree and bad fruit. The word used for "good tree," refers to the nature of the tree. Good fruit refers to the produce of the good tree. The fruit is compatible with what the tree is. The fruit matches nature of the tree that bears it. The apple tree will always bear apples and not peaches. On the negative side the bad tree produces bad fruit. And Jesus said that by "**By their fruit you will recognize them.**" The good tree has its

distinctive fruit, and you will recognize the tree by its fruit. This is the test of distinctiveness. Now there is,

a. A WARNING OF THE DECEPTION BY MEN. Matthew. 7:15.

“watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.” These wolves look harmless but they are ferocious. You ask “can this happen in the church?” Jesus says it can. The characteristics of these people who bear this kind of fruit, have been outlined as follows,

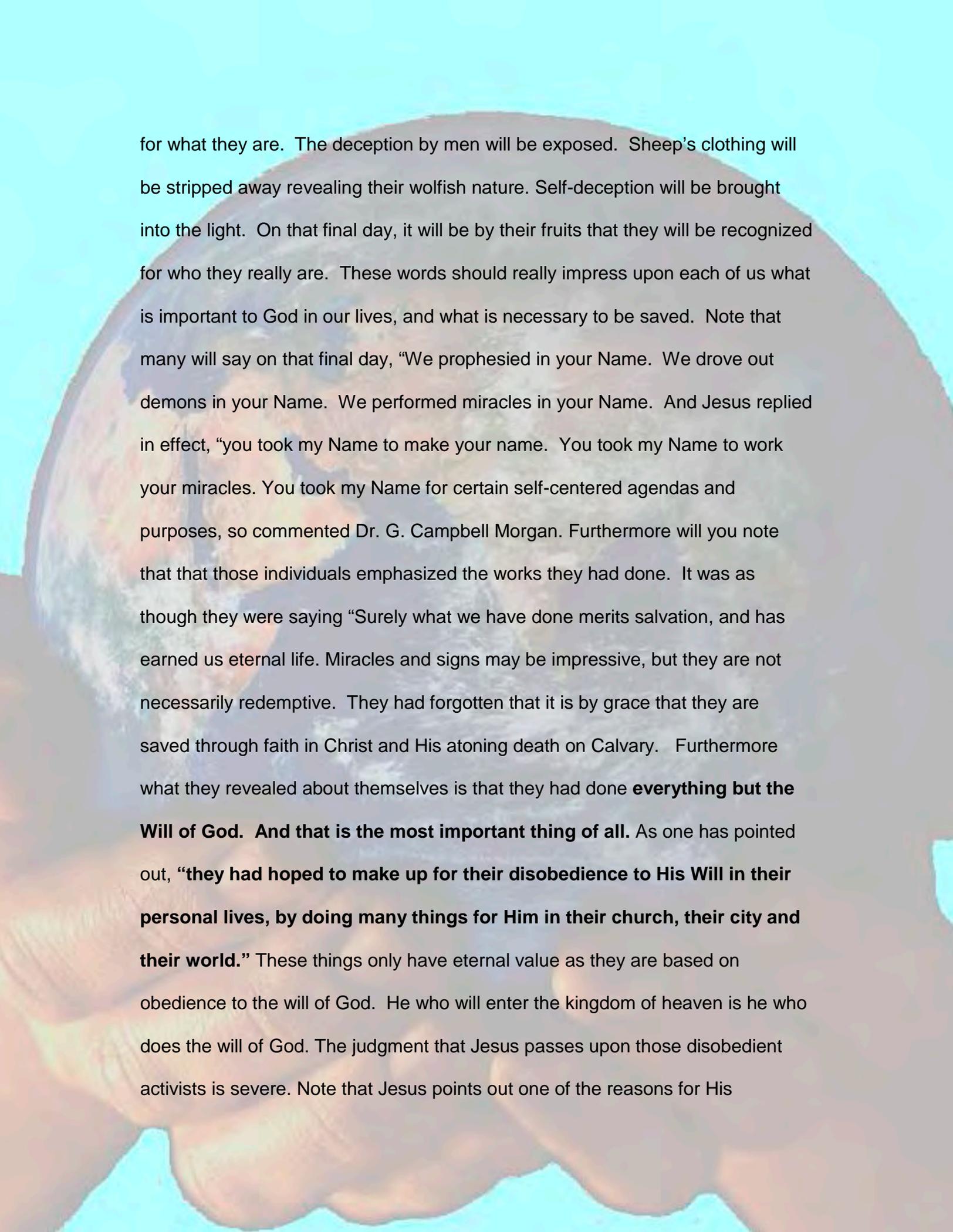
i. They are dangerous. They are vicious wolves whose intent is the disruption and the destruction of the people of God.

ii. They are deceptive. They look like harmless sheep, but they are **essentially wolves. They are not what they appear to be.** They are false prophets and their message is false. And Jesus warns us, Beware! Watch out! Be wide awake! Someone has rightly said that, “if you leave them alone they will soon show their greed or true colors, whereas if you appose them they will soon show their teeth.” The test that discerns between the true and false prophet is by their fruits and not their suits, or because they **appear** in sheep’s clothing. It is possible to wear sheep’s clothing and not be a sheep. It is possible to appear to hold the truth and look like a prophet and still be a wolf. The wolf in sheep’s clothing will bare their teeth when things do not go their way. They will reveal themselves because a bad tree inevitably bears bad fruit. It was Oswald Sanders who said that the **“the test of the true prophet is conformity to the scriptures in his teaching, and conformity to the character and teaching of**

Christ in his life.” He goes on “The false teacher with his attractive personality and plausible manner early insinuates himself into the favor of his flock. But though he poses as an innocent sheep, inwardly he is ravenous wolf. His words are honey and sweet and his true purpose is carefully concealed. In him the devil works as an angel of light.” What is true of the prophet is also true of he who claims to be a born again child of God. The telling point that Jesus is making is, that He is primarily concerned with the character of the person. He is not so much concerned with the message and what he says, as He is with the Christian Himself. He may profess to knowing the truth. He may even purport to be a Christian and know and teach the scriptures. He may be orthodox in his speech. The falseness may not be in the message, it maybe in himself. The test of the Christian is in the life or in the fruit he bears. Jesus said it is by their “fruits that you will recognize them.” There is the warning against the deception of men. There is also,

b. A WARNING AGAINST SELF DECEPTION. Matthew 7:21-23.

Jesus said, “not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the Will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord,’ did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me you evil doers.” Jesus in this teaching is still on the subject of bearing fruit. What is clear, is that on the last day when we stand before Christ will stand as we are. There are no hidden agendas and no camouflage suits The fruit of our lives will be revealed



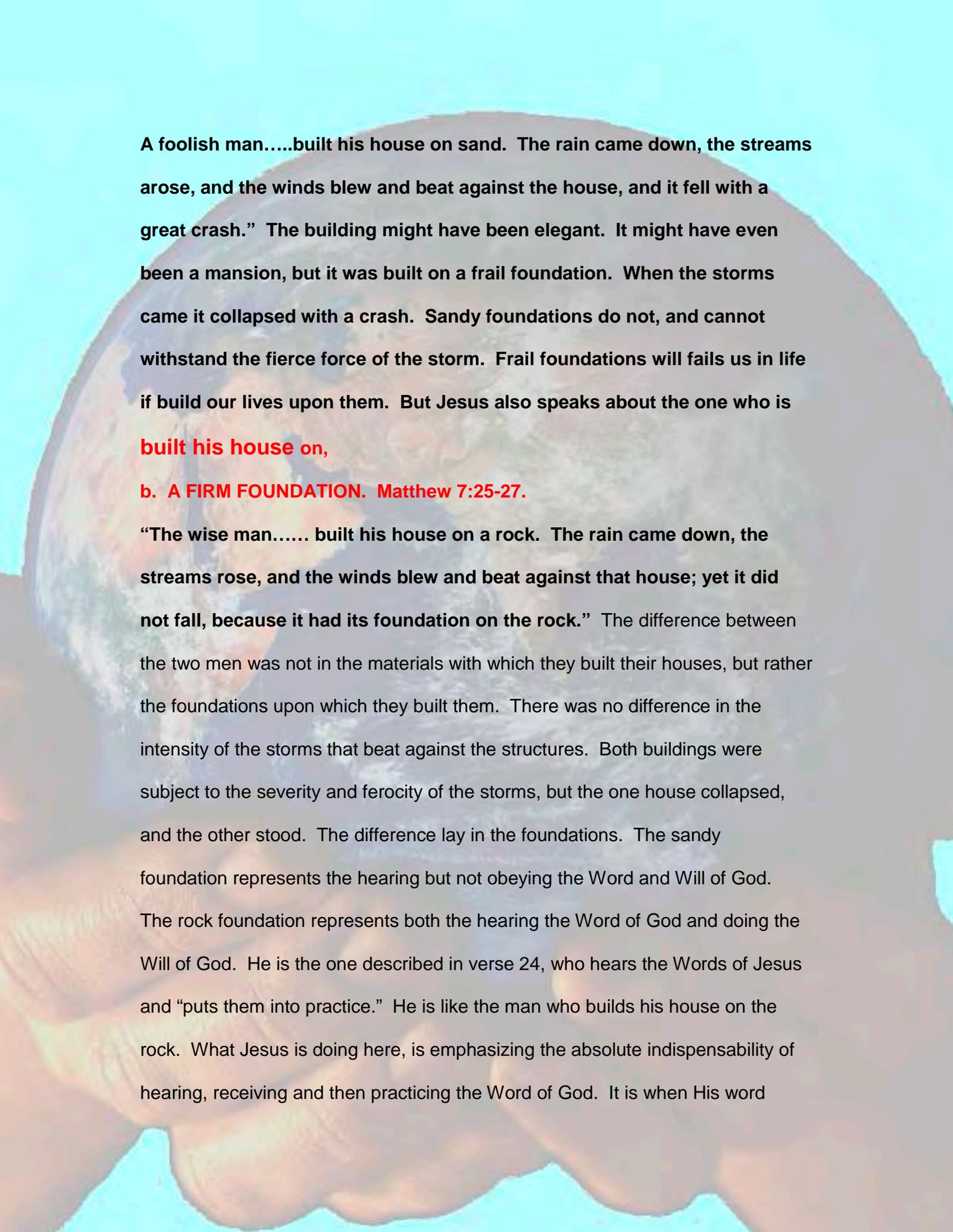
for what they are. The deception by men will be exposed. Sheep's clothing will be stripped away revealing their wolfish nature. Self-deception will be brought into the light. On that final day, it will be by their fruits that they will be recognized for who they really are. These words should really impress upon each of us what is important to God in our lives, and what is necessary to be saved. Note that many will say on that final day, "We prophesied in your Name. We drove out demons in your Name. We performed miracles in your Name. And Jesus replied in effect, "you took my Name to make your name. You took my Name to work your miracles. You took my Name for certain self-centered agendas and purposes, so commented Dr. G. Campbell Morgan. Furthermore will you note that those individuals emphasized the works they had done. It was as though they were saying "Surely what we have done merits salvation, and has earned us eternal life. Miracles and signs may be impressive, but they are not necessarily redemptive. They had forgotten that it is by grace that they are saved through faith in Christ and His atoning death on Calvary. Furthermore what they revealed about themselves is that they had done **everything but the Will of God. And that is the most important thing of all.** As one has pointed out, "**they had hoped to make up for their disobedience to His Will in their personal lives, by doing many things for Him in their church, their city and their world.**" These things only have eternal value as they are based on obedience to the will of God. He who will enter the kingdom of heaven is he who does the will of God. The judgment that Jesus passes upon those disobedient activists is severe. Note that Jesus points out one of the reasons for His

judgment on them, “.....I will tell them plainly I never knew you...” The knowledge of which Jesus spoke here is not intellectual knowledge, but the knowledge of a personal relationship with Him. Obedience to God’s will, and a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. He said on one occasion if you obey My commands you will remain in my love.” It is futile to say “Lord, Lord,” unless we are doing the Will of God and obeying His commands. To say “Lord, Lord” and not do what He expects, is a contradiction in terms. Jesus also said, “Why do you call me Lord, and do not what I say?” Jesus is after our obedience not our spectacular deeds. What is so revealing here is that if sensational activities are not accompanied by a full obedience to the Will of God, those who do them are called “evil doers.” We are self deceived said Jesus, if we think that the spectacular is evidence of a right relationship with God. Jesus said it is “by their fruit you will recognize them.” **Matthew 7:16. Good fruit is the distinctive mark of the genuine Christian. This is the test of distinctiveness. Finally note,**

3. THE TEST OF DURABILITY. Matthew 7:24-29.

Jesus thus far has talked about two gates, two destinies, two types of fruit, and now He talks about two types of builders and two kinds of foundations. The durability of houses are dependent on the durability of the foundations upon which the houses are built. Jesus teaches that there are two kinds of foundations upon which house are built. He uses two illustrations to impress upon us His message. There are those who build upon,

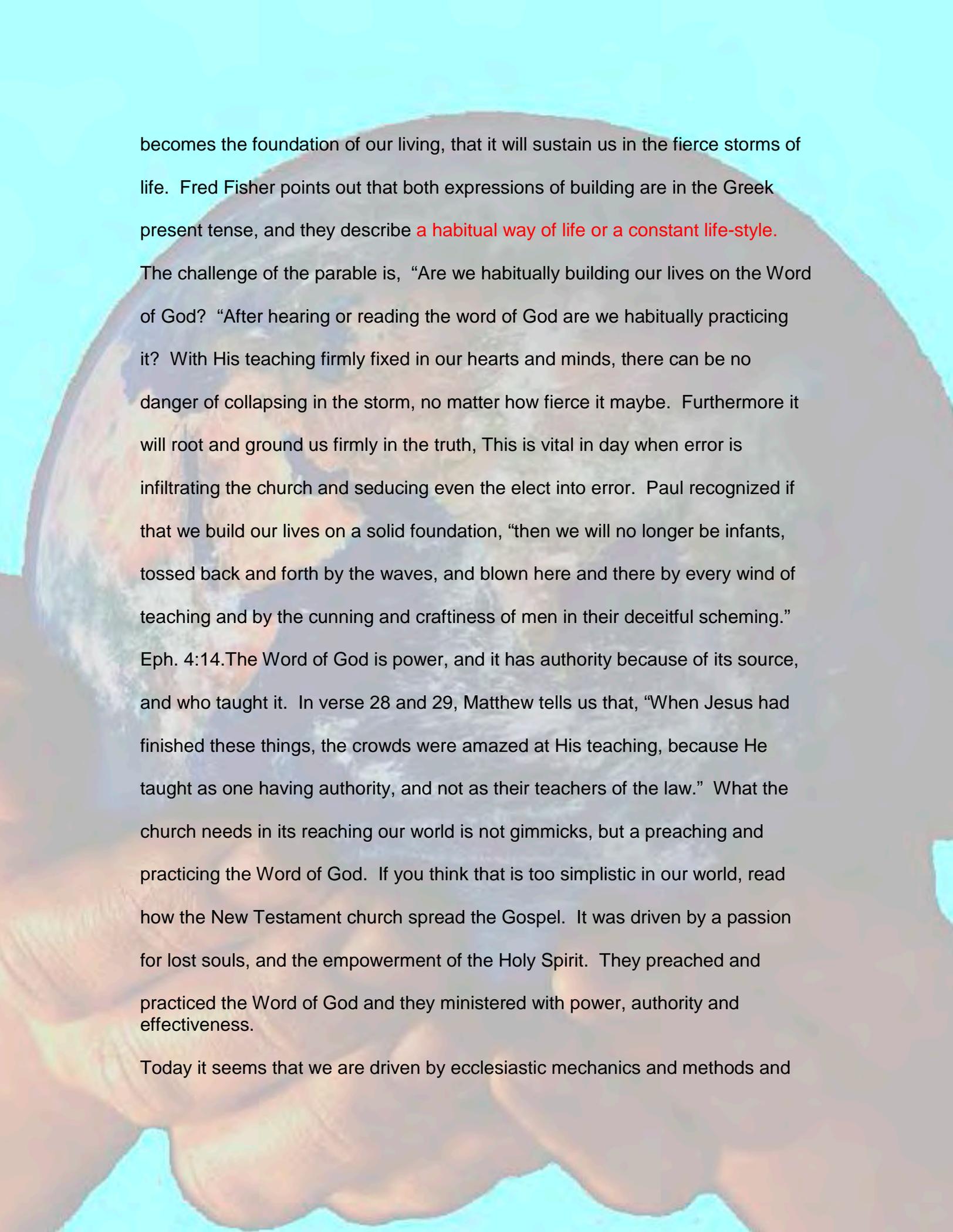
a. A FRAIL FOUNDATION. Matthew 7:27.



A foolish man.....built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams arose, and the winds blew and beat against the house, and it fell with a great crash.” The building might have been elegant. It might have even been a mansion, but it was built on a frail foundation. When the storms came it collapsed with a crash. Sandy foundations do not, and cannot withstand the fierce force of the storm. Frail foundations will fails us in life if build our lives upon them. But Jesus also speaks about the one who is **built his house on,**

b. A FIRM FOUNDATION. Matthew 7:25-27.

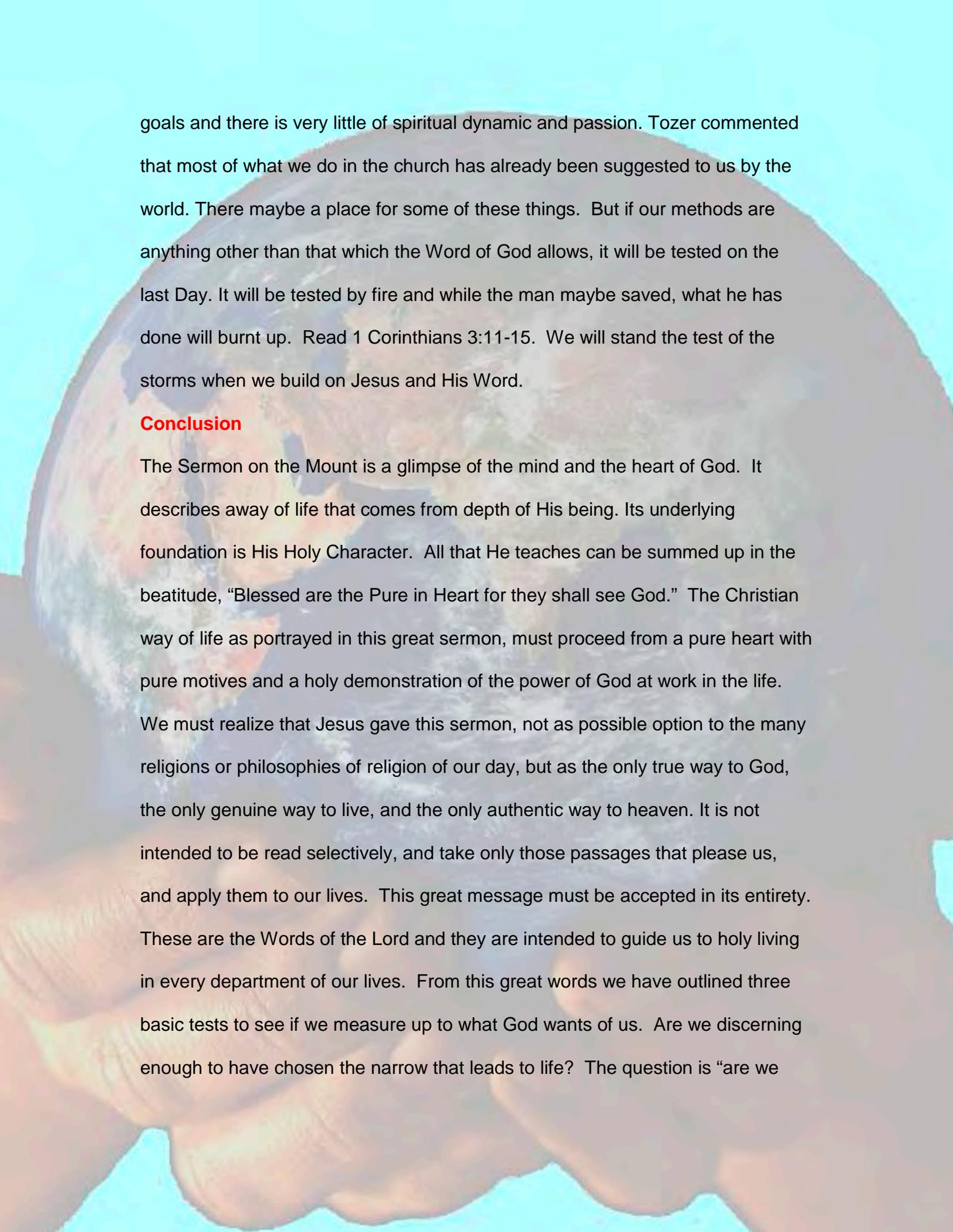
“The wise man..... built his house on a rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.” The difference between the two men was not in the materials with which they built their houses, but rather the foundations upon which they built them. There was no difference in the intensity of the storms that beat against the structures. Both buildings were subject to the severity and ferocity of the storms, but the one house collapsed, and the other stood. The difference lay in the foundations. The sandy foundation represents the hearing but not obeying the Word and Will of God. The rock foundation represents both the hearing the Word of God and doing the Will of God. He is the one described in verse 24, who hears the Words of Jesus and “puts them into practice.” He is like the man who builds his house on the rock. What Jesus is doing here, is emphasizing the absolute indispensability of hearing, receiving and then practicing the Word of God. It is when His word



becomes the foundation of our living, that it will sustain us in the fierce storms of life. Fred Fisher points out that both expressions of building are in the Greek present tense, and they describe **a habitual way of life or a constant life-style.**

The challenge of the parable is, “Are we habitually building our lives on the Word of God? “After hearing or reading the word of God are we habitually practicing it? With His teaching firmly fixed in our hearts and minds, there can be no danger of collapsing in the storm, no matter how fierce it maybe. Furthermore it will root and ground us firmly in the truth, This is vital in day when error is infiltrating the church and seducing even the elect into error. Paul recognized if that we build our lives on a solid foundation, “then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.” Eph. 4:14. The Word of God is power, and it has authority because of its source, and who taught it. In verse 28 and 29, Matthew tells us that, “When Jesus had finished these things, the crowds were amazed at His teaching, because He taught as one having authority, and not as their teachers of the law.” What the church needs in its reaching our world is not gimmicks, but a preaching and practicing the Word of God. If you think that is too simplistic in our world, read how the New Testament church spread the Gospel. It was driven by a passion for lost souls, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. They preached and practiced the Word of God and they ministered with power, authority and effectiveness.

Today it seems that we are driven by ecclesiastic mechanics and methods and



goals and there is very little of spiritual dynamic and passion. Tozer commented that most of what we do in the church has already been suggested to us by the world. There maybe a place for some of these things. But if our methods are anything other than that which the Word of God allows, it will be tested on the last Day. It will be tested by fire and while the man maybe saved, what he has done will burnt up. Read 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. We will stand the test of the storms when we build on Jesus and His Word.

Conclusion

The Sermon on the Mount is a glimpse of the mind and the heart of God. It describes away of life that comes from depth of His being. Its underlying foundation is His Holy Character. All that He teaches can be summed up in the beatitude, "Blessed are the Pure in Heart for they shall see God." The Christian way of life as portrayed in this great sermon, must proceed from a pure heart with pure motives and a holy demonstration of the power of God at work in the life. We must realize that Jesus gave this sermon, not as possible option to the many religions or philosophies of religion of our day, but as the only true way to God, the only genuine way to live, and the only authentic way to heaven. It is not intended to be read selectively, and take only those passages that please us, and apply them to our lives. This great message must be accepted in its entirety. These are the Words of the Lord and they are intended to guide us to holy living in every department of our lives. From this great words we have outlined three basic tests to see if we measure up to what God wants of us. Are we discerning enough to have chosen the narrow that leads to life? The question is "are we

bearing good fruit that is a demonstration of the activity of the Holy Spirit within us? Are we building on a firm foundation that is the word of God? If so we have passed the test.

