

Matthew chapter 7 is a continuation of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount address. It would be more accurate to refer to this address as "Sermons (pl.) on the Mount since it consists of several subjects, teachings or themes. It took place at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry on a hillside near the sea of Galilee. Its purpose was to accomplish three things 1) reveal Jesus as the new Moses and Messiah, 2) confirm the Law as still binding, 3) to rescue the truth of God's Word from those interpretations, practices and views which were patently false yet extremely popular among the people of God (in His day).

(t) Judgment Though the term "judge" is only explicitly used in (vv 1-2), the act of judging is carried through (verse 27). And the kind of judgment Jesus is concerned about giving us instruction on, is moral in nature (i.e. it is judgment w/respect to what or who is righteous/sinful). And though many in our world today would like to believe this kind of judgment sb avoided, in reality, it is not something that we as human beings cannot rationally escape¹. As it relates to the practical, living together on this planet demands that we make decisions and ultimately enforce laws that impact the realm of morality. IOW: our safety and success as the human race requires that we determine those things that are evil and those things that are good. Lastly, there is also a theological necessity to our judgment. It is our call as the moral image-bearers of God. (However) to possess right judgment (i.e. judgment that truly reflects God's righteous character; judgment also that promotes our overall safety and success), the following are necessary. Our judgment MUST be:

(i) 1. W/O hypocrisy. (1-5) = Though it may not be as clear in verse one, by verse five, the form of judgment that Jesus is prohibiting becomes abundantly evident. It is any form of judgment – which thru its execution, makes us guilty of hypocrisy. Hence why Jesus says, "You hypocrite" (5). This too is (ml) the area where the Jews where failing in their view (of judgment). It was at least as it concerned their most popular teachers, the Pharisees (Mat 23:4, 28-32). So then, "judge not" means, "judge not w/hypocrisy". What constitutes judgment w/hypocrisy? Judgment that "see(s) the speck in (our) brother's eye, but does not notice the log that is in (our) own eye" (3). Additionally, it is judgment that attempts to "take the speck out of (their) eye, when there (remains) a log in (our) own eye" (6). It is then not only the condemnation of someone else's wrongdoing/sin, but also our attempt to remove that particular sin from their life all while doing nothing about the same sin/wrongdoing in their own life – and according to Jesus, on a much larger scale (the other persons' sin is a "speck" in comparison to ours which is a "log"?). Two more important things not miss if we are to fully appreciate and understand what Jesus is teaching (here): 1) the remainder of verse one ("that you not be judged") and verse two ("For w/the judgment you pronounce you wb judged, and w/the measure you use it wb measured to you") is not Jesus providing a fancy escape clause from personal judgment; that we can somehow avoid being judged by God for such crimes if we keep from condemning others who are also guilty. Instead, He is telling us that not only will we (like those we are condemning) also be judged according to the same rules (again, verse 2), but also our additional sin of hypocrisy. The point then that Jesus is attempting to drive home is just the opposite of those looking for a way out of their own judgment. It is, "understand the 'measure' of God's law extends to all the same. And for those attempting to condemn and clean up the sin of another w/o dealing w/the same sin in their life, the penalty wb even worse – since now you are also guilty of the crime of hypocrisy! So then judge not (in that way -i.e. w/hypocrisy), 'that you not be judged' for that second crime (along w/the first – the sin you share in common w/the one you are condemning); 2) Though our ability to give accurate judgment is not hindered when there is hypocrisy, it does affect our ability to help others. Hence why Jesus says what He does in the remaining portion of verse (5) = If by "see clearly" Jesus is referring to the diagnosis of the sin itself, then the same wb true as it re: to that same sin in our own lives – which (in turn) would mean that His counsel for personal extraction before helping others wb impossible (since how do I extract a sin from my life that I cannot "see" is there – if again what "see clearly" is referring to is diagnosis versus help). Jesus is then (once more) referring to help – not diagnosis. Being a hypocrite does not necessarily mean I cannot accurately assess the sins of others (or even my own sin). It means I am not willing to personally deal w/what I absolutely know is there. Hence God's heightened wrath against the hypocrite (Luk 12:47-48).

(i) 2. W/discrimination. (6) = Based on their use in both the OT and other Jewish literature, the two sets of terms used by Jesus in this verse are synonymous w/each other (i.e. "dogs" and "pigs" refer to the same people; "holy and pearls" refer to the same thing). As it relates to "holy" and "pearls", what is in focus is that most valuable to God – His kingdom and its truths (His "holy pearls" – Mat 13:45-46) As it relates to the terms "dogs" and "pigs" they refer to those people who are outside God's kingdom/not given His kingdom truths; those not a part of the covenant community/church and in a saving relationship w/Him. Like those animals, they were considered to be spiritually (or morally) unclean – i.e. the Gentiles/unbelievers (Isa 66:3; Mat 15:21-26; Rev 21:27 w/22:15). (However) since Jesus' prohibition (here) cannot be in reference to unbelievers (seeing that they soon will be the disciples' mission field; who they wb offering the kingdom to – Mat 28:19-20 w/Act 1:8), those metaphors must be referring to a special kind of person outside of God's grace. It is the person who at one time, was in the church/saving covenant relationship w/God, but due to their unrepentant state, have lost their salvation (or covenant standing) permanently – i.e. the apostate. It also refers (specifically) to those people who claim to be God's people but refuse to stop embracing peddling their false gospel messages – i.e. false Christians. This would include false teachers (as well). This (iow) is how the terms "dogs" and pigs" are also used in Scripture (Deu 23:18; 2Pe 2:22; Phi 3:2; Isa 56:10-11). These people (then) are the worst kind of people outside of God's grace – those w/no hope of salvation or getting back into God's kingdom/covenant community/church; those also who never were – but think they are – yet have no ears to hear the true gospel message b/c of their love for false gospel lies. As such, Jesus' command to "not give dogs what is holy, and...not throw your pearls before pigs" is call to judge w/great discrimination. Not only are we to identify certain people in this way (those who meet the biblical criteria of an apostate or a false Christian/teacher) – an act of judgment in and of itself, but also never share (or stop sharing) God's holy pearls (i.e. His kingdom and its truths) w/them. Like God, we are also to keep them from such valuable things "lest they trample them underfoot and turn and attack (us)" = Jesus' prediction is spot on given this is already a part of their rap sheet (Heb 10:26-29; 2Pe 2:1-3 – "exploit" = attack; Jud 10). Jews' failed here (e.g. Mat 21:13).

(a) What such discrimination looks like = Separation (ceasing to: share gospel/God's truth w/them; ID them as Christians; fellowship w/them); Fenc'g-LT.

(i) 3. W/God's help. (7-8) = Seeing that judgment (or judging in re: to moral issues) is where Jesus' instruction begins in this chapter, good hermeneutics demands that we view the "ask...seek...(and) knock" of these verses in the same light. Jesus' words are almost certainly an allusion to passages like (1Ch 16:11-15; Isa 58:2; Jer 6:16). So then, we are not to be pursuing right judgment in this realm w/o the help of "(our) Father who is in heaven" (11). And the good news is that when we do, we will "receive", we will "find", and "it (i.e. the door of truth) will be opened" to us. Jesus' use of rhetorical appeal in the following verses is meant to put to rest any worry that God will not deliver in this respect (9-11 – "good things" = information necessary for right judgment). That it is indeed help in making moral judgments becomes obvious when the parallel account in Luke is considered alongside what the book of Acts teaches about the Holy Spirit's role in this area (Luk 11:9-13 w/Act 15:1-28 = Judging/discerning that God was not requiring that NC Christians also observe the OC application of the clean laws was the result of the HS'/God's help). Here the Jews of Jesus' day (as in times past) once again failed (Joh 8:47).

(a) How (then) we are to seek God's help in discerning issues of right and wrong = We are to search the Scriptures w/the covenant community (not individually). Consider again (Act 15:1-3 = Notice, though it begins as differences between individuals, it doesn't stay there – nor is God's help sought personally. They instead seek it thru the church w/Scripture). This is also how the HS "leads us into all truth" (Joh 16:13 = Jesus is speaking to the apostles who are founders/foundation of the church, the pillar and support of God's truth – Eph 2:19-20 w/1Ti 3:15; see also Gal 2:2).

(i) 4. Always seeking that justice be served. (12) = Jesus' instruction (here) is essentially a paraphrase (in reverse order) of what He declares later to be among the greatest commandments and the goal/purpose of all of God's Law/written judgments – to love for my neighbor as my myself. Hence why He states, "for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Mat 22:36-39 = "You shall love your neighbor [i.e. "do also to them"]...as yourself" [i.e. whatever you wish that others would do to you]...On these...depend the Law and the Prophets" [i.e. this is the Law and the Prophets]). As such, what Jesus is ultimately calling for, is judgment that always seeks that justice be served (rather than perverted, negated, dismissed or delayed), since this (according to Bible) is what loving our neighbor means (Lev 19:16-18; see also Deu 16:20). As before, the Jews of Jesus' day avoided this kind of judgment in relation to others. As a result, the OC people were oppressed/taken advantage of (Mat 9:36). This is what happens (btw) when justice fails (Isa 10:1-2, Eze 22:29, 45:9).

¹ Today those suffering w/severe thinking disabilities, will attempt to use Matthew 7, verse one ("Judge not") to support the irrational idea that we as people are never to judge all the while never realizing that their statement is itself a form of judgment – especially against those judging.

² That Jesus is indeed addressing the same sin in both parties is attested to by the fact that both persons are afflicted in the same way (i.e. each man has something in his "eye"). The only difference between them is the size (or degree) to which they are afflicted w/this same malady (or sin). If it was Jesus' intention to make His instruction cover any and all sin, then He most certainly would have picked a different affliction for one of the persons. Using different body parts to refer to different sin or (even) gifts in the church is quite common in the NT (e.g. Mat 18:7-9; 1Co 12:12-27).

(a) What judgment always seeking justice looks like = Making sure that our judgment: 1) is based on one law for all (Num 15:15-16), 2) is w/o bias or partiality (Deu 16:19), 3) that no-one is condemned w/o due diligence and sufficient evidence (Deu 17:6), 4) seeks the punishment which fits the crime (Exo 21:24; Lev 24:20), 5) reserves mercy until justice is served (Deu 16:19 – “pervert justice” w/Isa 30:18, 33:5, 42:1-4, 56:1, 61:8; Jer 4:1-2, 5:1, 9:24; Hos 2:19; Amo 5:13-25; Mic 3:9-12, 6:8; Psa 18:26; 2Co 4:1-2; Act 10:34-35).

(i)(g) 5. For a Christianity/gospel that is difficult. (13-14) = What Jesus is referring to in His comparison of differing gates are two different versions of Christianity/the gospel. The “gate (that) is narrow” represents true Christianity or the saving gospel, the gate (that) is wide”, false Christianity or the false gospel message. That much is pretty obvious and not all that surprising. What (however) is, is what He uses to distinguish one from the other. It is the issue of difficulty. IOW: You will know you are on the right path based on whether the Christianity/gospel you have embraced is difficult or not. The “way is hard that leads to life” (14), whereas the “way is easy that leads to destruction” (13). For those (then) who have embraced true Christianity or the saving gospel message, what they will experience are demands on their life/behavior which at times feel very restrictive (the literal meaning of the word translated – “narrow”) or afflictive (the alternate rendering of the word translated “hard” – 1Co 1:6, 7:5; 1Th 3:4; 1Ti 5:10; Heb 11:37). In contrast, those who have embraced that which is false, will not experience such things. Their version of Christianity will prove unrestrictive and non-afflictive. It will again be “easy” in respect to what is demanded of them to actually be saved. Hence why (then) Jesus says that “few” are those “who find” (or choose) the path that leads to salvation (14) - versus the “many” who choose what ultimately damns (13). People do not naturally gravitate toward what is difficult, hard, restrictive or afflictive. And that most especially when such things are tied to the act of submitting to Laws. This (according to Jesus’ words in Luke) are what drive so many away from true Christianity/the gospel – its demand that we fully submit to God’s Law (Luk 13:22-27 w/Mat 7:23 = “workers of evil”/workers of lawlessness”³). This also then is what makes the false version of Christianity/the gospel so easy. It does not demand submission/obedience to God’s Law in order to be saved. So then, if a person hopes to have right judgment in relation to the gospel – or the version of Christianity they choose, then this is what they w/b for: a Christianity/gospel that is difficult; that demands that I submit my life to the narrow restrictions - and at times, hard afflictions associated w/fulfilling God’s Law. Anything less than that, they will know is the path to Hell (e.g. faith alone in Christ is all that is necessary to be saved)⁴.

(a) How Jesus’ words (here) should affect our Christian/gospel expectations = True Christians/Christian churches w/b “few” not “many”. It is important to consider that Jesus speaks these words (Mat 7:13-14) while present on earth. The state of things after His departure – and the prediction for the future doesn’t get any better (Mat 24:3-13; Luk 18:8; 2Ti 3:1-5; Rev 2-3 = 5 out of the 7 churches are going apostate; 20:7-9). It is also worth mentioning that even during Christianity’s “golden age of missions” (i.e. apostolic times), there was only one recognized church per city/country –if any at all. Though attempts to plant churches thru-out the Roman Empire – or more per city/country were made – one or none existed/were recognized as legit (e.g. The cities and Isle of Cyprus proves to be unsuccessful during Paul’s 1st m.t. Hence, he never revisits).

(i) 6. Against false teachers. (15) = Jesus’ injunction to “beware of false prophets” requires being able to recognize (or identify) exactly who they are. There is (iow) a judgment call that must (first) made in relation to such persons before any action or avoidance can be taken. And consistent w/the theme of the overall chapter, that is exactly what Jesus is (again) calling us to do. Not only are we to make judgments in relation to what is and isn’t the true version of Christianity/gospel message, so also we must judge who are (and are not) God’s legitimate teachers. As w/the previous point, the fact that Jesus brings this up should make it abundantly clear that both were (and remain) problems for the people of God. IOW: There were (and w/b) false gospels and teachers embedded w/in the Christian landscape duping many of its followers.⁵ In the middle of verse (15), Jesus reveals (then) how these false prophets go undetected. “They will come to you in sheep’s clothing” – i.e. They will appear like godly men who love Christ/God’s Word. They will even do things that seem to demonstrate their commitment to/approval by God. **(22)** = The feats mentioned by these false Christians/teachers “on that day” (i.e. judgment day) are not challenged by Jesus (as though false or insincere). As such, they are to be considered genuine. More importantly, they are part of the criteria necessary for those claiming to be God’s special messengers (i.e. prophets or apostles - Deu 18:22; 2Co 12:12). This (again) Jesus does not challenge. Notice also, they genuinely believe themselves in submission to His Lordship (i.e. they call Him, “Lord, Lord”; see also the same in Mat 25:44 regarding the goats) – which means, others saw them that way as well. Finally, notice they are “many” not few – again supporting the fact that redemptive history from beginning to end, will exist in a constant battle against such self-deluded individuals. Where then must the judgment of the Christian reside if they are to successfully stand against them? What should we look for as the means to discerning/judging them as the “inwardly...ravenous wolves” they really are? The answer is found in **(16-20)** = This is not the only place the metaphor “fruit” is used to refer to a person’s behavior/actions (which is w/o a doubt how Jesus is using the term here). As such, we can consult those other places as a means to determining the kind of behavior/actions Jesus has in mind. When we do, we find only one kind of behavior/action in focus: obedience to God’s Law (e.g. Mat 3:8 w/Luk 3:8-14). Like the false gospel, so also false teachers: they are w/o the Law (in their preaching and/or their practice). Both types are identified in the NT (those preaching it but not practicing it = Mat 23:4; those not preaching/practicing = 2Pe 3:16-17). That this is (indeed) what Jesus is referring to by “bad fruit” is confirmed by His remaining instruction regarding them and their fate come judgment day. **(21-23)** = Receiving Jesus as Lord must be far more than simply in name. It means complete submission to Him in obedience – or more specifically, complete submission to God’s Law – what He came to see fulfilled in the lives of His people (Mat 5:17 w/Rom 8:4). “Many” (however) will not get this. They will instead (once more be “workers of lawlessness”). And that b/c many of their teachers neither practiced the Law nor preached its necessity. Even those w/in legitimate churches (Act 20:28). This (BTW) has always been the “giant tell” of a FT: the rejection/dismissal of God’s Law as necessary to salvation (Deu 12:32 -13:5). This (then) must be a part of the Christian’s judgment/discernment process if he is to be righteous in his judgment against false teachers – understanding what identifies them as such is a rejection of God’s Law in part or whole (again, Jam 2:8-11).

(i) 7. In favor of doing what Jesus says (over that of other teachers). (24-27) = The final principle/truth est’d by Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount address serves also to put teeth to everything already taught since it’s main message is this: only those who *do* (i.e. obey and put into practice) what Jesus says will make it to heaven. And by obey/put into practice, Jesus means even in the midst of trials/testing. They alone are “like a wise man who built his house on the rock...that did not fall” though the “rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house”. By way of contrast, Jesus also makes it clear that those who simply listen but fail to do/obey, when things get rough are not those who get to heaven. They are instead those whose spiritual houses are eternally destroyed/damned (i.e. the “foolish man who built his house on the sand”). That eternal damnation is the kind of destruction Jesus is referring to is confirmed by the context est’d in the previous verses (21-23 = judgment day). Those a part of this final damnation would therefore include those who have Jesus as Lord (or Savior) in name only—those who think “faith alone” is enough to get heaven. As such, we have (also) in this final portion, a connection to the previous sections (13-14,15-23). That connection is this: false gospels + false teachers produce false Christians – those who “hear (Jesus’) words but do not do them” (b/c again – they have been taught, it is not necessary). From the perspective of our judgment (again, the overall theme of this chapter), this (then) is the thing not to be missed. The reason their houses are built on “the sand of the damned” is not b/c of their ignorance in re: to Jesus’ words (they again, “hear” His words), but rather their choice to favor their teachers’ instruction/explanation over His (i.e. again, those FT’s telling them “faith alone is all you need”). Our judgment then is to favor/listen to Jesus regardless of what the multitudes of so-called Christian teachers might say (to explain His words away). That’s the only way to build on the Rock. Though it wouldn’t last, this was the response of those in Jesus’ original audience **(28-29)** = His words had “authority” vs. that of the “scribes” i.e. they were listening to Him).

(g) How (21-27) preaches the gospel = LBS! Jesus will NOT save anyone who simply calls Him Lord but does not *submit to Him* as Lord (Luk 6:46).

(a) What (21-27) demonstrates = 1) You are what you do, not what you think (you are). Hence why we will be judged according to our deeds. 2) You do who you listen to. Who are you listening to? Jesus or men who claim to be His followers but whose gospel is not the narrow/demanding path He preached? (e.g. you have embraced the gospel of faith alone will save you and send you to heaven).

³ According to the Bible, rejecting any part of God’s Law makes you guilty of rejecting it all or the crime of “lawlessness”. IOW: you either accept all of it or none of it (Jam 2:8-11; Rom 6:19; Mat 24:12). Hence why Paul was accused of being antinomian for his rumored stance against Christians observing the clean laws according to their OC application, though in reality his position (of faith in Christ) was in full compliance w/the law (since Christ is our clean law) (Act 21:21-24). This is why Paul is able to say what he does in (Rom 3:21-31 = thru faith in Christ we uphold the Law). For further study on this, see DRC’s series on Antinomianism.

⁴ You cannot require obedience in a faith alone position – even from the standpoint of result (i.e. a saving faith alone will always produce obedience), since obedience is a condition (not a result). This is easily discerned if one considers that our obedience is commanded, placing the responsibility for such actions upon us. This is also demonstrated by the fact that we are (and w/b) judged (i.e. held responsible) for such actions. The biblical/saving syllogism then is faith in Christ + faithfulness to Christ = salvation (versus faith alone in Christ = salvation). For further study see, [Views On Works In Relation To Salvation, RSJ, 2017](#). The Evangelical position of “faith alone” is actually the same as that of Roman Catholicism (i.e. a merit-based system of salvation).

⁵ To give an idea as to how prolific such false gospels and teachers were among the early church one only need consider that 15 of the 21 (or 65%) NT epistles deal w/one or both (Rom, 1Co, 2Co, Gal, Phi, Col, 1Ti, 2Ti, Tit, Heb 2Pe, 1Jo, 2Jo, 3Jo, Jud).