



# CAPITOL COMMISSION

## Building on a Strong Foundation (Luke 6:42-49)

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Jeff Whitebread / 484-680-4260 / Jeff.Whitebread@capitolcom.org

In the sermon on the plain, Jesus began by pronouncing blessings on his disciples, those who in their poverty have turned to him for both restoration and direction, along with woes for those who in their self-sufficiency reject him. He then lays out the basic ethical concern for those who seek to follow him, which is a love for one's enemies and a love for their brothers which is not judgmental but forgiving. Those who live like this will be blessed by God with both sonship and a relationship with their father, which is also not condemning but forgiving. However, as we consider the challenges of living a life of forgiveness and grace that is beyond any person's reach, he encourages his disciples with teaching that one's life will become a reflection of the teacher they choose. In this new realm and order we do not stand on the basis of our righteousness, but on the righteousness of our teacher Jesus Christ the promised Messiah. By choosing Jesus as the one into whom we will invest ourselves, in seeking his purposes and priorities we are assured that the life produced will be like that of our teacher. So, when true forgiveness is demonstrated in our lives, we understand it is only possible because of the transformation that has happened in our heart. In that moment, we will know that it is Christ who accomplished this work in our life and be assured that the blessings promised are a certainty, not because of what we have done, but on the basis of the work God the Spirit has accomplished in our hearts. Jesus now closes this sermon with two parables. He places the emphasis on the priority the heart in the parable of the two trees and on the imperative nature of obedience in the parable of the two foundations. For the follower of Jesus he again leaves us with this tension between heart and obedience. An over emphasis in either direction that minimizes the significance of the other is both unbiblical and unchristian. Each of us typically falls into one of these two categories, and so, identifying this tendency in our lives is helpful in addressing those planks that may plague our ability to see ourselves clearly.

**Luke 6:43-49 - (43) "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, (44) for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. (45) The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (46) "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? (47) Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: (48) he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. (49) But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When**

***the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."***

### GOOD FRUIT ONLY COMES FROM A GOOD HEART

*For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit* - In the parable about the two trees Jesus makes an astounding truth claim that is foundational to a proper biblical understanding. Is the world filled with good people who on occasion, or even often, do bad things? This is not Jesus' assessment of the situation; there are good trees that produce what is good and there are bad tree that produce what is bad. The truth of the gospel is that mankind is fallen and function as rebels against God, and in reference to this parable are deemed as the bad trees. From God's perspective, it is impossible for a bad tree to produce anything that God judges as good. This needs to sink into our hearts and should reorient our thinking. If a tree is bad, then everything it produces is bad because this is the assessment Jesus makes. While this may be a hard pill to swallow, this teaching of Jesus forces us to come to terms with how we understand his definition of what is good and what is bad.

*Good fruit... bad fruit* - When considering the definition of both good and bad it is important to remember that we must understand these terms from Jesus' perspective. For example, when a certain ruler came to Jesus in Luke 18:18 and addressed him as "good teacher," he is reminded that none are good but God alone. Good from Jesus' perspective it a descriptive term that is applicable only to God and what God produces. If what is good according to Jesus is directly connected to God and what he creates, then what makes a thing bad is a result of its disconnected nature from God. So no matter what is produced it can never be classified as good from Jesus' perspective, for fruits are good only if they grow and ripen on the basis of divine involvement.<sup>1</sup> For those who are bad trees do not acknowledge God or give him thanks, but their foolish hearts are darkened (Romans 1:21).

*For each tree is known by its fruit* - This teaching reiterates the point made by Jesus earlier, everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher (Luke 6:40). Our life speaks to what we value and who we seek as our top priority. This cannot be hidden from the watchful eyes of the world. Those who come in contact with us will see our teacher through the fruit of our lives. With this as our confidence, we must have the courage to examine the condition of our heart. As the parable of the soils reminds us, it is possible to have the good seed sown in our hearts and still have its fruit choked out and kept from maturing because of the cares and concerns of this life. What mechanism have we placed in our lives to see ourselves clearly from a spiritual perspective, to help us make a proper assessment of o heart? In the

### BIBLE STUDIES

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context of this sermon, a life that becomes like Jesus their teacher is seen as a person who is able to extend the mercy of God through a heart that loves one's enemies and a non-judgmental attitude toward their brothers and sisters. So, in this initial teaching by Jesus, the foundational principle he seeks for us to understand is that good fruit is seen within the context of relationships and how we relate to one another on the basis of Christ's influence in our hearts.

### **ARE YOU GOING FAR ENOUGH?**

*Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?* – Even though Jesus is speaking to disciples who have separated themselves from the religious establishment and are seeking to follow Him, they still need to travel farther in their commitment to him as Lord. The word Lord means teacher or master. However when one calls him “Lord, Lord” it no longer just means teacher, but he is the teacher of teachers, the master of all masters, the one who speaks for God himself. In this passage, we learn that calling him Lord does not go far enough, there is still more that is expected. While calling Jesus Lord is appropriate because they have respect for him as one who speaks the words of God and demonstrates the power of God through his miracles. An understanding of who Jesus is or an admiration for what he has done falls short of Jesus' expectation. The problem for Jesus is that one would call him Lord and yet not be willing to do what he says. He is not seeking those who have a fascination in his teaching or an admiration with his life. He is looking for those who would be his true followers, those who hear his words and respond in obedience. Anything else falls short and leads to a disastrous outcome.

Jesus began his sermon by revealing that his true followers are those who have seen their poverty and brokenness; they have assessed their true spiritual bankruptcy and cling to Jesus. To these people he goes farther when he says, my true disciples are not only those who see their own sinful condition and need spiritually, but they are those who love their enemies. My true disciples are not only those who acknowledge their own sin and hate it. They are also those who love, pray and bless those who persecute them. As we consider these two basic tenets of Jesus' kingdom, we quickly realize that these can only be produced by a work of God in the human heart. In regards to our sin, our fallen nature over-estimates our own goodness. It is only God that can open the eyes of our heart to gain a correct assessment of one's utter wickedness before a holy and righteous God. As it pertains to loving our enemies, this is not something that is done in the world. This is not natural and speaks as the other evidence of a person who belongs to God. While only God can accomplish this work in the lives

of his people, it is also the demand that Jesus places on all who dare call him Lord and master of their life.

*Laid the foundation on the rock* – Jesus uses this illustration of building a house on a foundation of rock to demonstrate the importance of being men and women who hear and obey God's word. This description of digging deep carries with it the idea of repentance, the digging up of one's weakness that lies beneath the surface of our lives and confronting the sinfulness of our hearts with the truth of God's word. This is neither a quick or painless process. However, if we lay our foundation upon Jesus and what he says, if we commit to taking him at his words in obedience, we have built our lives on an unshakable foundation. The storm of divine judgment is coming and its work is to expose the foundation of one's life. Building a strong foundation is building with Jesus' teachings as the lens through which we measure the quality of our construction. It is Jesus' commands and his expectation through which we secure for ourselves a life that will not be swept away when judged by God most high.

### **APPLICATION**

Jesus concludes this message with a stark warning for those who were considered his followers. He is speaking to those who had sought Jesus out to hear his preaching or be healed of their ailments, however there is still more that is required. Jesus was not looking for the crowds; his message was not targeted to the masses. What Jesus was looking for are those who are interested in building their lives on a strong foundation, those who are willing to hear the words of Jesus and respond in obedience. It is the same message for us today; we will all face the storm of judgment. Having an admiration for Jesus or an appreciation for his teaching will leave us with a life that is built without a foundation and will come crashing down when confronted with divine judgment. Jesus is looking for those who are willing to dig deep, those who seek a deep understanding of one's sinful condition, and those who seek a deep understanding of the gospel and its expectations placed on one's life. A surface commitment to Jesus in which we profess him as Lord but live with ourselves as master is shallow Christianity and does not go far enough for him. He demands that what we say match how we live, because in the end there will be no escaping the truth of our duplicate life.

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1 - Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley & Gerhard Friedrich, electronic. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964). 545.