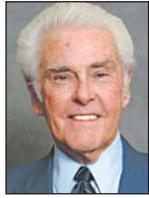


Transformed in my actions

Interpreters of this section of Jesus' teachings often divide it into The Two Ways (13-14); The Two Trees, sometimes called Two



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invite persons to accept one or more pathways to life.

The essential impact of the entire section is the call of Jesus to practice as well as to study His teachings. H. Leo Eddleman, in a study book *The Teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5-7*, introduced this section in this way: "Christ again called upon the disciples to practice as well as to hear and agree to His teachings. Having set forth in this Mandate what membership in his kingdom included, the Lord added in effect, 'Now you see what the kingdom of heaven is like; now you understand how you must live if you become of it; will you enter it?'"

The Two Ways (Matthew 7:14-14). Verse 13 is a bit deceptive because it almost sounds like Jesus is encouraging people to enter the wide gate which enters into the broad pathway to destruction, but clarification comes quickly. Many do enter the wide gate and discover it is the broad way to separation from God. Two ways open before them: the easy way of self-indulgence, or the hard way of self-denial.

"The *narrow way* probably denotes entrance into the Kingdom, and the *straitened way* the life to be lived after

entrance.... *And few be they that find it*" (A. M. Hunter, *A Pattern for Life*, p. 88). Questions have been raised if Jesus meant that only a few could be saved and enter the kingdom, but we must remember that Jesus died on the cross to save the many, so we should not accept this one reference as a definition of his ministry. He likely was trying to challenge the Jewish listeners to know that life in faith is a continual struggle.

The Two Trees (Matthew 7:15-23). As Jesus reflected on the history of Israel, he reminded them of the false prophets who had come on as spiritual leaders but whose prophecies turned out to be false. Contemporary so-called religious leaders can also turn out to be false prophets with their widespread TV audiences. They can turn out also to be "ravenous wolves" rather than prophets of righteousness.

Today a similar comparison can be made of those selling of stocks and bonds, especially to older adults, or financial investments which turn out to be scams. I had a phone call last week, ostensibly from an IRS agent, requesting me to call her number. Checking the Internet, it turns out that this was a scam claiming that I owed IRS a considerable amount of money.

These are definitely the diseased trees of the financial world that often parade as religious guides. Be sure to carefully study financial offers that help you save money.

"Character is the one thing needful' seems to be the main thought. A good character, for Jesus, is the product of a pure heart. A like produces like — you cannot expect Cox's oranges on a

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Scripture: Matthew 7:7-27

crab apple tree — so real goodness is the fruit of a heart cleansed by God's grace" (Hunter, p. 89).

Choose to build your life on Christ and his teachings (Matthew 7:24-27). The parable distinguishes between a homeowner who builds his new home on a rock foundation and one who builds his house on a sand foundation. Recent reports of homes either being washed away or burned to the ground in West Virginia and California give eloquent testimony to how easily we can lose physical assets in a flood or fire. All we can do is make as much preparation as possible and turn our needs to the Lord.

G. Campbell Morgan has an excellent summary of our text. "The final word is, 'He that doeth the will of my Father.' That is the final test of everything."

The contrast of builders determines the outcome of the flood. "The figure of speech is so simple that a child can understand it. Christ says there are two foundations upon which we can build. If we want to build more stately mansions for the soul, watch the foundations. Notice carefully the words of august majesty. He that heareth and doeth builds on rock. He that heareth and doeth not, builds on sand."

The invitation has been given. What will your answer be?

John Howell is academic dean emeritus at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.