

**ONE OF THE SCARIEST PASSAGES IN THE BIBLE**  
**MATTHEW 7:21-23**

**INTRO.:**

1. One of the most dreadful and terrifying statements to come from the lips of Jesus occurred at the end of the Sermon on the Mount.
  - a. In Matt. 7:21-23, Jesus pronounced a curse, not upon the wicked pagans, or hypocritical Pharisees; but upon those who were professing their belief in Him.
  - b. In this passage Jesus dealt with one of Satan's dirtiest tricks – Making people believe that they are God's children, when they really are not.
    - 1) Sadly, we find that Satan has a way of blinding people to their true spiritual condition, and making them think they are OK when they really are not.
    - 2) For example in Rev. 3:17 we read: *“Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.”*
  - c. Simply, Satan has deceived more people into believing they are OK with God, than he has with trying to get them to believe there is no God.
2. In his book, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life* (pp. 159-60), Charles Swindoll told the following story:
  - a. “Several years ago, in Long Beach, California, a fellow went into a fried chicken place and bought a couple of chicken dinners for himself and his date late one afternoon. The young woman at the counter inadvertently gave him the proceeds from the day - a whole bag of money/cash - instead of the fried chicken he ordered. After driving to their picnic site, the two of them sat down to open the meal and enjoy some chicken together. They discovered a whole lot more than chicken - over \$800! But he was unusual. He quickly put the money back in the bag. They got back into the car and drove all the way back to the store. He got out of the car, walked in, and became an instant hero. By then the manager was frantic. The guy with the bag of money looked the manager in the eye and said, "I want you to know I came by to get a couple of chicken dinners and wound up with all this money. Here it is." Well, the manager was thrilled to death. He said, "Oh, great, let me call the newspaper. I'm gonna have your picture put in the local newspaper. You're the most honest man I've heard of." To which they guy quickly responded, "Oh no, no, don't do that!" Then he leaned closer and whispered, "You see, the woman I'm with is not my wife...she's uh, somebody else's wife."
  - b. You see things are not as they always appear to be.
  - c. As this story points out what we see on the outside does not always reflect what is on the inside.
3. Thus as Jesus comes to the end of the Sermon on the Mount, He gives us this grave warning in Matt. 7:21-23.
  - a. In our text Jesus will be speaking to us about what happens to us when we chose the wrong path and follow the wrong teachers.
  - b. One of the saddest things about this passage is that many of the people who think they are on the right path are on the wrong one and they do not even know it.
  - c. The simple fact is that there is more to entering into the gates of heaven than many of us would want to admit.
4. This passage serves as a warning to anyone who calls themselves a Christian.
  - a. We can be deluded into thinking we are on the road to heaven when we are really on the broad road to hell.
  - b. According to this text there will be many surprised at the judgment, for those who assumed they are pure and clean but were not.
  - c. Thus, we must examine ourselves to see whether we are genuine Christians who are characterized by the righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20), or something far less.
    - 1) If we are genuine, then on the day of judgment, we will hear the Lord Jesus Christ, our Judge, say: *"Come, you who are blessed by the Father! Take your inheritance which is the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."*
    - 2) But if we are not, we will hear these terrible words of doom: *"I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"*

5. This AM, let us go back to this passage and notice what Jesus has to say about, “Who will enter into the kingdom of heaven?”

LESSON:

- I. In vs. 21 Jesus gives us the setting for this text.

A. The Story

1. As we start our text we see a picture of people coming before Jesus at the final judgment.
  - a. They are standing in line as they get to the end of the path they have chosen.
  - b. They have just completed the path that they have made for themselves.
2. In the context the path may have included a little of Jesus mixed in with everything else they were doing in life.
3. As you look at this picture you can see that some of these people had been members of a church, maybe some of them were an active part of the church.
  - a. They had heard numerous sermons on how Jesus demands first place in our lives, but they thought that really did not fit into their “lifestyle.”
  - b. While Jesus was important to them, they felt that He really did not mean those things about denying self or taking up your cross daily and following Him.
  - c. After all, “Jesus really does not expect us to let Him reign as king in ALL areas of our lives.”
4. So as these people are approaching Jesus they are in line calling out His name and saying, “Hey Jesus, Here I am.”

B. But notice what Jesus has to say on the matter: vs. 21: (Read).

1. The fact that the people cried out “Lord, Lord” indicates that these people understood who Jesus was and that they thought they had made a commitment to Him.
  - a. John MacArthur Jr. in his commentary on Matthew said, “To address Him as ‘*Lord, Lord*’ was to add a spirit of intense zeal to demonstrate strength of devotion and dedication. In verse 22, the three references to ‘*your name*’ are emphatic and convey the significance of who He is. Jesus is therefore talking about those who make a profession of faith in Him.”
  - b. The fact is that Jesus is talking about people we would call dedicated Christians.
2. In this verse Jesus very bluntly tells them that lip service is not what God is looking for.
  - a. Lip service without obedience is meaningless.
  - b. Here Jesus was giving a clear warning to all professing Christians that the confession, “*Jesus is Lord,*” or that “I accept Christ into my heart as my personal Savior” is not enough.
    - 1) Jesus was saying that one's confession must be matched by complete obedience to God.
    - 2) A Christian's confession must be matched by Christian conduct.
  - c. Thus Jesus is warning that not all who confess His name will enter heaven.
3. William Barclay in his commentary on Matthew said: “There are two great permanent truths within this passage. There is only one way in which a man's sincerity can be proved, and that is by his practice. Fine words can never be a substitute for fine deeds. There is only one proof of love, and that proof is obedience. There is no point in saying that we love a person, and then doing things which break that person's heart. When we were young maybe we used sometimes to say to our mothers, “Mother, I love you.” And maybe mother sometimes smiled a little wistfully and said, “I wish you would show it a little more in the way you behave.” So often we confess God with our lips and deny him with our lives. It is not difficult to recite a creed, but it is difficult to live the Christian life. Faith without practice is a contradiction in terms, and love without obedience is an impossibility.”
4. Jesus clearly points out that a life without “*doing*” the will of God cannot save us.
  - a. Doing God's will does not mean that we are sinless, or totally perfect.
  - b. But it does mean that our life is one that displays an overall obedience to His will.

5. Notice several passages where this same thought is taught:
  - a. John 8:31-32: “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, ‘If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’”
  - b. 1 Tim. 4:16: “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”
  - c. Heb. 3:14: “For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.”
  - d. Heb. 5:9: “And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.”

C. As we further look at vs. 21 we find that Jesus tells us that “the one who does the will of God enters into the kingdom of God,” but what does He mean by that?

1. When you become a Christian, more is supposed to happen in your life than just going to church once in a while.
2. When we are baptized into Christ, we are telling Jesus that we belong to Him and that we are going to live for Him
  - a. I could list Bible verses all day that show us that God expects faithfulness and not lip service or a show.
  - b. Once again I am not suggesting that you must be perfect, but rather that you must do the best you can in surrendering your will to Jesus.
3. It is as we truly yield ourselves to Christ that God’s grace will make up where we fall short.
4. We do not do God’s will in order to receive salvation; rather we do it because we already possess salvation.

D. Sadly, in this verse Jesus tells us that there is such a thing as “an unsaved believer.”

1. James tells us that faith WITHOUT works is dead and useless.
2. He also tells us that the demons believe, but are not saved: Ja. 2:19: “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.”
  - a. Demons acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, the Holy One of God and the true God.
  - b. But because they refused to submit to God’s will they were lost.
3. These people cried, “Lord, Lord,” indicating that they were zealous and earnest.
  - a. They were claiming an intimate knowledge of Jesus.
  - b. They were saying, “We are your friends. Lord, you know us, don’t you?”
  - c. But all their confidence was based on a delusion; they were not doing God’s will.

II. In vs. 22 we find the scene changing.

--Now after Jesus has explained that unless you have done the will of the Father, you will not enter into the Kingdom of God, the pleading starts.

--Look at vs. 22: (Read).

A. This is where we stand before Jesus and try to justify to Him our lack of desire to put Him first in every area of our life.

1. Notice that the pleading involves telling Jesus about all the “good” things we have done to “earn” our way into heaven.
  - a. They were telling Jesus that they were doing miracles, preaching and so forth in His name.
  - b. They were telling Jesus they were doing all these things by His authority, and since this is the case they deserved a place in heaven.
2. These people are laying out an impressive list of things they did for “Jesus,” but He remains unimpressed.
  - a. In Hosea 6:6 God tells us, “For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”
  - b. In Mark 7:6 Jesus said: “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me.’”

3. The simple fact is that they that they acknowledged Jesus with their lips, but in reality, their hearts were far off.

B. ILLUST.:

1. It was said that many years ago, a notorious gangster named Mickey Cohen attended a Christian evangelistic meeting in Beverly Hills.
2. The meeting was being led by a young evangelist named Billy Graham.
  - a. Graham was just starting out in his evangelistic campaigns and no one had really heard of him before.
  - b. But everyone knew about Mickey Cohen, and Mickey was attracted to what he heard at the meeting.
  - c. Afterwards, Billy Graham and some of the others talked to him about salvation, but he made no commitment at that time.
  - d. Sometime later a Christian friend read to him Rev. 3:20 – “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock.*”
    - 1) The friend then asked Mickey if he wanted this salvation.
    - 2) Mickey said, “Yes, I do.”
  - e. The news of his conversion made quite a sensation, and the ministry of Billy Graham became known across the nation.
  - f. There was only one small problem - nothing in Mickey Cohen’s life changed.
    - 1) When his friend confronted him about it, Mickey complained: “You didn’t tell me I would have to give up my work!” [Mafia]
    - 2) “You didn’t tell me I would have to give up my friends!” [gangsters]
  - g. Mickey had heard that so-and-so was a Christian athlete, and so-and-so was a Christian actress, so he thought he could be a Christian gangster.

C. While not many of us plan to be gangsters, the story fits.

1. When we give our lives to Jesus, we will have to give up some things.
2. Putting Jesus first in our life will cost us something, and many are not willing to let Jesus take them that deep.
3. The people Jesus was speaking about did not have a relationship with Him.
  - a. They thought their actions would warrant them getting into heaven.
  - b. But religion deeds will not make you right with God, only a relationship with Jesus will do that.
  - c. The simple fact is that God is all about relationships.
    - 1) A right relationship with God will motivate us to do His will.
    - 2) A right relationship with God will motivate us into actions that are pleasing to Him.
  - d. Jesus said: John 14:21: “*He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.*”

III. In vs. 23 we gaze upon the final tragic scene.

--Here Jesus tells these people who thought they were on the right track the words they did not want to hear.

--Vs. 23: (Read).

A. Notice what Jesus said here:

1. Jesus said to those who claim Him but never trusted in Him enough to give their entire lives to Him, “*I never knew you.*”
2. That is, “I have never known you as My disciples, and you have never known Me as your Lord and Savior.”
  - a. “We have not had an intimate relationship with one another.”
  - b. “You chose your kingdom, but it was not My kingdom.”

- B. Because they lacked that intimate relationship Jesus said, *“Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.”*
1. This command is almost identical to what Jesus said in Matt. 25:41: *“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’”*
  2. Jesus tells them that they are practicing *“lawlessness.”*
    - a. Professing Christ and practicing lawlessness are totally incompatible.
    - b. The word indicates a continuous, regular action, and identifies the unrighteous life patterns of those who were claiming Jesus as Lord.
    - c. When we continually practice lawlessness we are giving evidence that we do not belong to Christ.
    - d. When we practice lawlessness we are not hungering and thirsting for righteousness.
    - e. All religious activity, no matter how orthodox and fervent, that does not result from obedience to the lordship of Christ and the pursuit of His glory is rebellion against the law and will of God.
- C. In our text Jesus is showing that the inconsistencies in life are significant.
1. Christians must act like Christians.
  2. Our words and deeds must be consistent with what we profess.

### CONC.:

1. It is terrifying to think that a person can profess Christianity throughout his life and call Jesus, *“Lord,”* but not enter into the kingdom of God.
  - a. So we must ask again: *“Who, then, will enter the kingdom of God on that Day of Judgment?”*
  - b. Jesus said the answer is, *“the one who **does** the will of God my Father who is in heaven.”*
  - c. In Matt. 12:50 Jesus said, *“Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”*
  - d. Those who do God’s will are the citizens of the kingdom of heaven.
2. Calling Jesus, *“Lord,”* must be more than just a name to us; it must express our relationship to Him, and our whole attitude toward life.
3. Those who will be citizens of the kingdom of heaven are those who have submitted their whole life and will to the Father’s will.
  - a. They are the ones who do ALL of the will of the Father, and not just those parts that they feel like doing.
  - b. They are the ones who are truly striving after the righteousness that comes from the Father.
  - c. And they are the ones who are practicing this righteousness because they want to please their Father in heaven.
4. The scene that Jesus just described is one that no one who calls themselves a Christian want to experience.
  - a. It is also one that Jesus does not want you to experience and that is why He shared it with us.
  - b. Somewhere along the line people have gotten the impression that God does not care how they live.
  - c. But God does care and He cares because He loves you and wants what is best for you.
5. Jesus wants you to be with Him for eternity.
  - a. The real question is:
    - 1) Do you want to be with Him?
      - a) Do you truly want to go to heaven?
      - b) Are you willing to do whatever it takes to get there?
      - c) Are you willing to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to put the Father’s will first in every area of your life?
    - 2) Or do you want to be one of those to whom Jesus says, *“Depart from Me, I never knew you?”*
  - b. If you want to go to heaven, Jesus had told you how to get there?