

Professing Christ With Your Lips But Not With Your Life

Matthew 7:21-23

March 3, 2013

Dr. David Harrell

I would like to invite you to take your Bibles and turn to Matthew's gospel chapter 7. I will be stepping away from our normal verse by verse study of a book for several months. This morning I am beginning a new 15 sermon series called, "Banished, 15 ways to be banished to an island of spiritual infancy." Today we will examine the first. Before we look at Matthew 7, I would like to just prepare your ears for a moment. As we think about the Christian life, I think we would all agree that at times it is very demanding. Even with our new nature and the power of the indwelling spirit of God we often find ourselves swimming against the current of this world. Sometimes we relax in our lives and without realizing it, the world takes us where it will. When this happens we succumb to the power of our enemies within and without—that of the flesh within, and Satan and the world without. Enemies few really understand. Those who fall prey to these adversaries are described in 1 Corinthians 3 as, "men of flesh, babes in Christ" who have received the milk of elementary gospel doctrine. But because they continue to think and live as they did before they believed in Christ, the apostle Paul says they are not able to digest the solid food of the deeper doctrines of a gospel-centered life. To be sure according to the writer of Hebrews 5:14: "solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." The purpose of this series is not only to expose the character of spiritual immaturity and how it is nurtured in our lives and in our churches, but also to offer "solid food" as Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:15, to help us, "grow up in all aspects into (Christ)."

Like the Apostle Paul said in Galatians 4:19, "I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you". Christ is born in us that He might live through us. I long to see Christ visibly alive in your life and in my life. I long to see you being transformed into His image from glory to glory by the inward operation of the Spirit of God. That process can only be accomplished through the power of the Spirit of God and through the instrument of His word. For this reason Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth, Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

So we approach the word of God again this morning for the purpose of examining ourselves. Most of us go to a doctor periodically to get a physical examination. If you don't, you need to, it's important. Over these next few weeks—and frankly, whenever we come to hear the teaching of the word—we need to come for the purpose of a spiritual examination. So rather than going to get a *physical*, we are coming here to get a *spiritual*. But before examining matters of spiritual maturity in the life of a Christian, it is first crucial to understand what a Christian really is? That's why I have chosen this text in Matthew 7:21-23. From this text, I have entitled my discourse to you this morning, "Professing Christ with your lips but not with your life."

Let me read the text that we will examine in a moment beginning in verse 21: "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not

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prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you, depart from Me you who practice lawlessness."

Here the Lord Jesus addresses the tragedy of self-deception. He does so by giving us a glimpse into the future when He will judge unbelievers. This is a terrifying scene, but it is a scene filled with truths that I fear, unfortunately, are seldom preached, seldom understood. I believe that here He allows us to witness 3 things that I would like to discuss with you this morning.

1. A Dire Warning.
2. A Dubious Defense.
3. A Damning sentence.

Now before we examine these matters more closely I'd like to give you a general overview of what Jesus has been talking about here in Matthew chapter 7. He has been dealing with the matter of hypocrisy, the pretence of religiosity that will damn the souls of the self-willed and self-deceived, false professors of Christ, phony Christians.

In Matthew 7 He begins by cautioning believers to righteous discernment when judging others. He warns of the hypocrite who is prone to see the speck in another man's eye and not the log in his own. Professing Christians who cannot perceive who they really are. In fact Jesus said earlier in Matthew 6:22: "The lamp of the body is the eye, if therefore your eye is clear your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is within you is darkness, how great is the darkness." For the hypocrite who cannot see the light of truth, the internal corruption of his nature emanates darkness within his very soul, which causes him therefore to walk in darkness even though he perceives what he is doing is light.

Jesus goes on to warn of false prophets, predators in pulpits, those who wear the sheep garment of a faithful shepherd but inwardly are ravenous wolves. These are the "savage wolves" that will rise up from within the church of which Paul warned the Ephesians in Acts 20:29-31. Deceivers that masquerade as purveyors of Christian truth. He speaks of these covert agents of Satan, some of them witting, many of them unwitting, those who twist the scriptures, who teach doctrines of demons seducing others to follow them. He even goes on in Matthew 7 to help us understand how to spot them. He says in verse 16: "You will know them by their fruits." The fruits of their lives will be the fruits of the flesh not of the Spirit. If we look at other passages in the New Testament we learn even more about the character and conduct of the false teacher. They are motivated primarily by fame and power and greed and sexual immorality.

Then Jesus forces his followers to choose between 2 options, both claiming "this way to heaven!" First He asks us to choose between 2 gates: the narrow and the wide. In verse 13 Jesus commands: "Enter through the narrow gate: for the gate is wide and the way is

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broad that leads to destruction." The term narrow means to restrict. This is a compressed gate. In fact the term comes from a root word that means to groan. Once does not enter this gate with ease, he has to squeeze through. It is a gate that does not allow a man to enter with the excess baggage of self-righteousness. It's a gate that requires the recognition of spiritual bankruptcy, being consumed with guilt over sin, fully aware of judgment deserved, having violated the laws of a Holy God. You see, a man will only enter this gate when he renounces the old self, puts on Christ and with intense pressure resulting from his overwhelming sense of guilt before a Holy God chooses to come to God in faith and obedience.

In Luke 13 Jesus was asked this question, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" to which He answered, "Strive to enter the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." The term "strive," agonizomai in the original language, was used to describe being engaged in an athletic contest that requires great exertion. So this is not a gate of easy believism and cheap grace. This is one a man cannot just ease through like a stroll in the park. Nor will it be a gate that the masses will choose to enter. It's a gate that a man or woman must enter alone. This is the gate of genuine conversion. This is the gate entered in by the broken, overwhelmed, helpless, and hopeless, crying out like the publican "have mercy on me a sinner." This is the gate, dear friends, of self-denial, not the gate of self-fulfillment, a gate where a man must count the cost of discipleship. He must discredit and discard his self-will; he must abandon his self-righteousness. He must be willing to reject all of his self-centered ambitions and become a willing slave of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

For this reason Jesus said in Matthew 16:24: "If anyone wished to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it." When He says deny yourself, the term literally means to "renounce yourself," to be repulsed by your sin. To be repulsed by all the ways your sin has corrupted your life and made you an enemy of God. It's the idea of having a radical departure of the way you were.

I might add that this is a radical departure from the modern gospel of self-fulfillment and self-indulgence that is preached today in many sectors of evangelicalism. This is a gate where one embraces the truth of Acts 4:12: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." But Jesus warns in verse 14 that few are those who find it. The reason they can't find it is because it's not the gate they are looking for. I might also add it's not the gate that is very often preached. You must remember that Satan is alive and well. The word of God tells us that he is the father of lies, he is cunning, scheming. We are told that the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one. We are told that he veils the eyes of those who are perishing in whose case the god of this world has blinded the eyes of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. How does he do this? Through counterfeit, Satan is a master counterfeit. He counterfeits truth in both the religious world and in the secular world. How many people do you know

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believe the insanity of evolution? He also counterfeits different Christ's; contrives different kinds of Christ's that people worship. Of course these are Christ's that appeal to the flesh. And he also influences and trains counterfeit preachers who preach a counterfeit gospel, who in turn have followers that are counterfeit Christians. They are in every church, tares amongst the wheat. In fact Jesus had one in His first church, his name was Judas. These people meander through the wide gate, but give no thought of the narrow. Remember the wide gate says, "this way to heaven", it's roomy, spacious, it's inclusive, attractive, no need for any striving here, no need for conscious, strenuous effort, groaning and crying out for mercy. No, this is the easy way.

Many modern day pastors are bent on attracting seekers. In order to do this, they have to define sin in such a way that virtually no one can be offended. In light of that, the essence of their definition goes something like this: *Sin includes all those things we think and do that rob us of fellowship with God and steal away the happiness He wants us to enjoy.* So the good news of the gospel is reduced to nothing more than God loving us so much that He sent His son to save us from our *unhappiness*. Describing sin apart from the offended, righteousness of God is not just irresponsible my friends, it is heretical. Apart from an understanding of man's condemnation before a Holy God that evokes His wrath, the gospel is no gospel at all.

When the average postmodern unbeliever hears a sanitized version of the gospel, he has no basis to grasp the dreadful reality that the wrath of God abides upon him, that he must get right with God and be reconciled to Him through faith in Christ. Instead, he will respond as follows (and this is consistent with numerous conversations that I have had with people in this regard). Here is what he will say in response to a sanitized gospel:

"Yeah, if God is real, I suppose I am guilty of ignoring Him. I don't think about God very much, and I love lots of things more than God. So to that extent, I suppose I am living in prideful rebellion. And yes, I have fallen just like the whole Satan analogy-just look at all the junk in my life. Relationships are messed up. My marriage is boring. My finances are a wreck. I hate my job. I basically feel as though my life is going nowhere fast. For sure, I need to be saved from all this stuff. Maybe God is the answer to my unhappiness, my lack of success, my negative emotions, and my lack of purpose and direction in life. I'm just glad God loves me just the way I am, because I'm not sure I could ever change. I am what I am. And I'm not sure why Jesus had to come and die for me (assuming all that's true), but I'm glad He did. I sure don't get all that stuff about the Father killing His Son-so much for a loving God. But I'm told I have to accept that stuff by faith, so I guess I will. Nothing else seems to be working. I suppose Jesus died on the cross so He could demonstrate what selfless love is all about. Anyway, I want to take advantage of anything God may have to offer to make my life better. So I think I'll accept Jesus as my personal Savior and see what happens."

So he raises his hand, he walks the isle, he repeats some sinner's pray, and he is welcomed into the kingdom of God and told to never let anyone tell him that his salvation

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is not sure. What a radically different response than the tax collector in Luke 18 who when confronted with his sin said this in verse 13, he was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" My friends it is crucial to understand that such desperation to flee from divine wrath will never occur unless they understand how their sin has violated the law of a Holy God, and without that a man cannot be saved. Without such abject humility and contempt for personal sin, no one will ever cry out for undeserved grace and mercy, and never be given the gift of faith and be justified by His grace. It is said that Martin Luther was considered by many to be absolutely insane because of his profound conviction over sin. One of the things he struggled with was a question that haunted him frequently. It was something like this: How can an unjust man ever stand in the presence of a Holy God? Of course the answer, as he learned, can only be found in the great doctrine of justification by faith alone through grace alone in Christ alone. What a blessing when the Holy Spirit awakens a man's soul to the truth of his sin and the Savior! Then when fully awakened, a man will forsake everything to enter in through that narrow gate of genuine repentance.

In Luke 16:16 Jesus warned that when: "the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached everyone is forcing his way into it." This denotes a vigorous, forceful pressing into the kingdom. Jesus expanded upon this concept warning in Matthew 11:12: "from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force." There Jesus emphasized that despite the world's relentless opposition to the kingdom of God; it will never be subdued by the wickedness of men or the power of Satan. And those who see their sin, those who love their Savior, will by the power of divine grace, forcefully press their way into the kingdom even if it cost's them their life.

So Jesus forces His followers in Matthew 7 to choose between 2 options, both claiming this way to heaven. They must choose between 2 gates, the narrow and the wide, which give access to 2 ways; the narrow and the broad. The world will hate you in the narrow, but love you in the broad. You will suffer in the narrow way but you will fit right in on the broad. You will serve Christ on the narrow way but you will serve self on the broad. I recently read an article that said this; "One in four born-again Christians hold Universalist thoughts when it comes to salvation, according to a new Barna analysis of trend data." Twenty-five percent of born-again Christians said all people are eventually saved or accepted by God. A similar proportion, 26 percent said a person's religion doesn't matter because all faiths teach the same lessons. In an even higher proportion, 40 percent of born-again Christians said they believe Christians and Muslims believe the same God.

Barna defined universalism as the belief that all human beings will eventually be saved after death. The California-based research and polling firm defines born-again Christians as people who have made a " personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today, and who believe they will go to heaven after death because they confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior." My friends I might add that no born-again believer would believe any of that, only a false professor.

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There are 2 ways; the narrow and the broad, they lead to 2 destinations, Jesus said, life or destruction. One leads to eternal life, one leads to eternal death and punishment. Those on the broad way think everyone's going to heaven. All you have to do is go to the average funeral and you will hear the preacher say, "Oh isn't it wonderful that he's in a better place."

He speaks of two groups as well; the few and the many. Think of what Jesus is saying. He is saying that the majority of people who name the name of Christ and who claim they are followers of Christ *are not*. Jesus said in Matthew 22:14: "Many are called, but few are chosen." In other words, the gospel of Christ goes out to millions and millions of people, yet mercy is granted only to the few, those who enter in through the narrow gate. May I give you a practical warning here, whenever you see vast multitudes of people clamoring after some Christian guru; know that theirs is a wide gate gospel that appeals to the flesh of the many, not the few. Genuine salvation requires the end of self, not the satisfaction of self. We do not come to the Savior primarily to find self-fulfillment, happiness, or purpose in life. Those are secondary by-products of salvation. We come for forgiveness of sin and for the imputed righteousness of Christ which results in lasting joy, faith, hope, love, blessing, eternal life.

You may recall in John 6 there were vast multitudes of people following after Jesus. Of course they were, He had just fed the 5,000 which ultimately translated, if you added the women and the children, into more like 15 to 20,000 people. They hungered after physical, not spiritual, bread. Then they got mad and they abandoned Him when they heard Him preach on the sovereignty of God and salvation. When they found out that He wasn't going to give them what they wanted, they wanted the wide gate, the broad way, they were the many not the few. It is estimated that at the close of Jesus' minister there may have been roughly 500 followers of Christ. Again, you see the few, not the many.

The few and the many are likened to two kinds of trees; the good and the bad. The fruit of the good tree will manifest itself on the vine of a person's life by godly attitudes and actions. You will see in the good tree a person who fears and loves God, who trembles when he thinks of the transcendent grandeur of our Holy God. He will have an attitude of Holy awe. He will see God as a consuming fire, and yet he will experience joy at the same time because he knows he is safe and hidden in Christ. He will be in awe of His glorious attributes. He will find his greatest happiness in living for the glory of God. But the bad fruit on the bad tree knows nothing of any of this. He thinks its all folly because that tree is spiritually dead. It can produce no fruit.

These two trees produce two kinds of people, Jesus says, two kinds of people who profess Christ: the sincere and the self-deceived. Representing two kinds of spiritual builders; the wise and the foolish. Who build upon two kinds of foundations; the rock and sand. Who erect two kinds of houses of faith; one that will stand the storms of final judgement verses one that will collapse in a heap of eternal disappointment.

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In light of this, Jesus offers the most chilling prediction concerning the masses of people who fall pray to self-deception, who think that they belong to Him but they don't. This leads us back to our text in verse 21. First we see *the dire warning*. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." What a terrifying thought! This is one of the most sobering passages in all of scripture. This is the horrifying climax of spiritual blindness and I might add self-blindness. Friends, here the masquerade of the many who entered the wide gate and traveled the broad way is exposed. The phrase "Lord, Lord" indicates perceived zeal and devotion to Christ. You must understand, we are not talking about agnostics here. This isn't referring to atheists, apostates, or pagans. These are people who throughout their life have professed faith in Christ. Obviously not all who profess Him possess Him. Profession alone is meaningless unless it is validated by a selfless life devoted to Christ. We see this in contrast when we look at Jesus words. Notice He uses the words "says" versus "does." How often have we heard it said "actions speak louder than words." Obedience is the only indicator of one's faith in Christ. For this reason the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you-unless indeed you fail the test?"

Beloved, look at the motives of your heart, examine the desires of your heart, be brutally honest with who you are in your secret life. Do you have an inner longing for holiness? Do you have a passion to know the Lord more intimately? Do you have a sincere desire to live for His glory; do you hate your flesh and the sins that it loves? This is the stuff of genuine Christianity. This is what Jesus is looking for, "those who do the will of My Father." A will that can only be performed by the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God dwelling within a new creature in Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10 the Apostle Paul gives a sample list of the kinds of moral sins that characterize the unsaved. There we read: "Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate (those who blur the God-intended male-female roles, who corrupt the natural sexual functioning of a man and a woman- gender perversions like transvestites, transsexuals), nor homosexuals, (sodomites, lesbians), nor thieves, nor the covetous (those that desire what others have/discontent with what they have), nor drunkards, nor revilers (destroy others with words), nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God." So if those kinds of things are the habit of your life don't fool yourself. You've got to examine your heart, and if you look at your heart and you know in reality "I have no real love for the Lord God, I have no compassion for the lost, I have no mourning over my own personal sin, I have no hungering and thirsting for righteousness, I have no appetite for the Word of God, I have no joy in the habit of prayer, I have no private or public devotion to the glory of Christ", My friends if you secretly love the world and yourself more than Christ, He is not your Lord regardless of what you think and you have no basis to believe otherwise.

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In Proverbs 30:12: "there is a kind who is pure in his own eyes, yet is not washed from his filthiness." What validates genuine saving faith is doing the will of the Father. That is what Jesus is reminding us of here. This begins with the attitude of your heart and it's manifested in your life. In Hebrews 5:9 this is made abundantly clear: "He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation." We must understand that one of Satan's most effective and powerful weapons is to deceive men and women by creating religious systems and cultures that distort the character of God, that distort the Gospel of God that distort the Word of God. Then on top of that, convince men that somehow they are able to reconcile to God because of something they have done, something they can do, or basically just on the basis of who they are. In our contemporary evangelical culture people are routinely invited to come to Christ, but unfortunately to a Christ that frankly bears little if any resemblance to the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible. "Just make that decision, accept Him, pray this prayer and your good to go." Please don't misunderstand, I'm not saying that scripture teaches us that we earn our salvations by works. But what the scripture teaches is that works prove our salvation.

In James 2:17 we read: "Faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." Jesus said in John 8:31: "If you abide in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine."

1 John 2:3-6: "The one who says, I have come to know Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him; the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."

So here in Matthew 7, Jesus is saying that the majority of people that call themselves Christians are self-deceived. Unlike the few, the many do not do the will of the Father. And again, that is a sheer impossibility because the Holy Spirit of God does not dwell within them. They profess Christ with their lips but not with their life.

Notice secondly *the dubious defense*. In verse 22: "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'" What's amazing about this scene is that these false professors are incredulous, dumbfounded. They cannot believe that they are standing before the Lord Jesus Christ not as Savior but as Judge and Executioner. In utter horror and desperation they are pleading their case. So we might ask the question, why are they being rejected? After all, they call Him Lord, Lord? Well certainly the answer is not because they lack sincerity. No, they are rejected because their Lord is not the one true Lord. It is not the true Lord that is sitting on the bench of holy justice. The One that they are standing before after heaven and earth has fled away. They stand with no place to run, no place to hide before that great white throne with Jesus as the judge. You see their Lord is one of their own making, their own liking. A Lord that appealed to their flesh. One, they were convinced would accept them on their terms. Moreover, what they *say* does not match what they *do*.

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Jesus said in Luke 6:46: "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord', and do not do what I say?" Sadly this dubious, this untenable defense will be made by a variety of false professors on that day.

There will be the *superstitious Christian* standing there. These are Christians ruled by emotion and fantasy rather than the word of God. They're either giddy for God or they're in the gutter of depression. They worship Him in Spirit *and more Spirit*, and *more Spirit* but not in truth. They worshipped Him in such a way that the subjective was not regulated by the objective. So they lived on a roller coaster of Holy Spirit superstitions. For these kinds of Christians truth is determined by experience not by sound doctrine. They are the ones that Paul described in 2 Timothy 3:6-7 those: "Those led on by various impulses, always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Notice their unacceptable defense includes prophecy, exorcisms, and miracle workings. Look at the text more closely, they say: "did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" It is fascinating that this list of perceived evidences with which they choose to vindicate themselves are all 3 external acts of religious sensationalism that are common place in modern day Pentecostalism and the fringes of the charismatic movement, but they prove nothing.

The Lord of the superstitious Christian is nothing more than a genie in a bottle that can be manipulated to grant wishes and impress other people. He is not the sovereign ruler of the universe.

Another false group of professors that will be there can be described as the *cosmetic Christian*. His religion is as shallow as lipstick. His faith is only skin deep. His religious affiliations and appearance is meant to do nothing more than sooth his conscience. Not to feed his soul, not to worship the Lord his God. He has the appearance of godliness but he denies His power. This is the type of Christian that loves the spotlight, looks for a stage to go do his thing. Sometimes he can be seen riding the white horse of search and rescue as long as there's a crowd watching. He loves to waive the banner of social justice but he has no concern for the justice of God brought to bear on the souls of men. For the cosmetic Christian the Lord he has created exists to make him look respectable and to silence his accusing conscience, but my friends, he is not the omnipotent, omniscient Lord of the universe at whose feet Peter fell saying: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD!"

The *Sunday morning Christian* will also make this claim of "LORD, LORD." With full throat he sings, "LORD, LORD" on Sunday but lives as if He doesn't exist the rest of the week. He has no desire to be an integral part of the church, part of the body of Christ. No passion to serve Christ, too busy with other more pressing priorities. He knows nothing of presenting his body as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. This is the type of Christian that sings hymns with his voice but not with his heart. He prays before meals

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but he knows nothing of the joy of intimate fellowship and communion with his Lord. He reads his Bible with his eyes, silently proud of his piety, but has no longing for the word of God, or for the God of the word. The Lord he professes is merely a cultural icon, a smiley face Jesus who is just glad to have him on his team. He is *not* the resurrected, ascended Christ who will judge the living and the dead.

The *mechanical Christian* will be in that group. This is the legalist, the ritualist, the type of Christian that just goes through the motion of religion, deceiving himself and others with his sanctimonious charades. Like the Pharisees he sees himself as superior to others, but his pride will precede his fall. His Lord, again, is not the real Lord. His Lord is a Lord of law, one he thinks he can impress, not the Lord of undeserved mercy and grace. For this reason this type of person lives in the bondage of ever increasing rules and rituals that fuel his self-righteous pride and offer him the illusion of spirituality.

So the Lord gives the dire warning, He hears the dubious defense, then He pronounces the guilty verdict and finally *the damning sentence*. Notice verse 23: "And then I will declare to them, I never knew you." The term "new" is an idiom denoting an intimacy, an intimate type of loving relationship often used to describe marital intimacy in the bible. Jesus said in John 10:27: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them." I have an intimate love with them, their My sheep. But He says, "I never knew." "Yes, I saw all of your religious acts, I witnessed your external veneer, I know perfectly well the counterfeit Lord you concocted. But that wasn't Me. I saw through to your heart, you deceived yourself and happily so. You entered the wide gate, you traveled the broad way with the many not the few. The fruit of your life was bad and your profession is false. You were foolish and you built your house of faith on sand, the sand of human achievement rather than the solid rock of divine grace. So the charade is over. Your hypocrisy will now end forever, no more lies, no more rationalizations, because now the penetrating light of divine omniscience has exposed you and laid you bare." For this reason He says in verse 23: "depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." The grammar in the phrase "practice lawlessness" indicates continuous, habitual actions. In other words, this was the pattern of a man's heart—life-dominating sinful motivations, secret desires that were self-willed and rebellious against God.

Later we read our Lord's haunting words in verse 27: "and his house fell, and great was its fall." Such will be the terrifying sentence for the false professor. Those who professed Christ with their lips but not with their life. As I thought about this, I remembered the soldiers that came with Judas along with the chief priests and the Pharisees that came to arrest Jesus in the garden. If the soldiers and hypocrites who came to arrest Jesus were thrust to the ground when in His state of humility in the garden He merely said, "I AM HE", how shall the lawless stand before Him in His majesty when He sits upon the Great White Throne?

Oh dear friends, I challenge each and every one of you to examine yourself, to validate the genuineness of your faith according to the criteria Jesus gave and not your own.

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And if Christ is not your Savior and Lord, He will be your judge. So I beg you: run to the Cross and plead for His undeserved mercy and grace. Enter through the narrow gate and be saved lest someday you experience the eternal consequences of self-deception.

I leave you with these thoughts:
O what grace, what love deprived,
from fools who cherish damning lies.
What hope, what joy, what life, what loss,
when men deny the Saviors' cross?

The gate is wide and way is broad
for those who live a life of fraud,
whose house of faith built on the sand
will fall when judgement waves His hand.
But oh what joy on that glad day,
for those who pressed the narrow way.
Whose soul is hid in Christ alone,
whose sin the Savior full atoned.

What hope for sinners saved by grace
who sought no other way but faith,
who strived in pain to enter in,
denying self, confessing sin.

Oh blessed Savior, Lord and King!
Our hearts of You doth daily sing.
Be glorified, accept our praise,
Come quickly! Is the prayer we raise.

Let's pray together. Father we thank you for these eternal truths that cause us to look closely at our lives. Lord, I pray that you will move upon the heart of anyone that does not know you as Savior, especially those who can see that what they do does not match up with what they say. Lord I pray that the things that we have studied today will bear fruit in each of our lives for the cause of Christ, for the eternal kingdom. To the praise of His glory and grace. Amen.