

Sermons on Matthew

Have We Not?

Matthew 7:21-29

With Study Questions

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1/23/2005*

Have We Not?

Matthew 7:21-29

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ⁻²²⁻ Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ⁻²³⁻ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ -

⁻²⁴⁻ “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ⁻²⁵⁻ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

⁻²⁶⁻ “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ⁻²⁷⁻ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

⁻²⁸⁻ And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, ⁻²⁹⁻ for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (Matthew 7:21-29)

I. Who May Abide?

Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? ² He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart. . .
(Psalm 15:1, 2)

It is quite popular in evangelical circles, during the course of evangelism, to ask “If you were to die today, do you know if you’d go to heaven?” The Psalmist asks and answers that question in the above passage. The answer Jesus gives in the Sermon on the Mount is the same—with the inclusion of who will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Not everyone who says to Me, ‘ Lord, Lord, ’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who __does the will of My Father in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

The negative declaration of “**Not everyone**” hits pretty close to home. For it is not the pagan or secularist which Jesus addresses, but the religious; their lips utter “**Lord, Lord.**” This portion of the message, over and above a message of evangelism to the lost, is a message of warning to those who call themselves Christians.

Pastors, elders, church members take heed! What is the basis, or ground, of our assurance of salvation and what are we teaching others? “Lord, Lord,” Christians seem to be blossoming aplenty. “I know I am saved due to faith,” one might answer, and they would answer correctly; but what kind of faith? What does the faith look like?

Jesus gives a positive declaration, defining the nature of saving faith. “...**he who __does the will of My Father in heaven,**” Jesus teaches. Just what is the will the Father in heaven? It would be irresponsible to yank these words from the context of the sermon. In case we have forgotten what Jesus has been teaching, I will re-write the list:

- A poor and mournful spirit (5:3, 4)
- Meekness (5:5)
- Hunger for righteousness (5:6)
- Mercy (5:7)
- Purity of heart (5:8)
- A peacemaking disposition (5:9)
- A willingness to endure trials (5:10-12)
- The pursuit of good works to the glory of God (5:13-16)
- Obedience and respect for the law of God (5:17-20)
- Love of your brother (5:21-26)
- Purity of thought (5:27-30)
- Faithfulness in marriage (5:31, 32)
- Honesty (5:33-37)
- A generous and non-retaliatory disposition (5:38-41)
- A love of all, including your enemies (5:43-48)
- A heart desiring to please God rather than men (6:1-4; 16-18)
- Sincerity in prayer and worship (6:5-7)
- A forgiving heart (6:14, 15)
- An undivided loyalty to God (6:19-34)
- A non-judgmental heart (7:1-6)

- A heart which asks, seeks, and knocks for these things (7:7-11)
- A proper, godly, treatment of others (7:12)

A Silly Question

Is this to say, then, that we merit our salvation by keeping these acts of righteousness at a suitable level? They say there are no silly questions. But if ever there was a silly question it was uttered by the rich young ruler who, in the presence of pure righteousness, asked “**_Good _Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?**” (Matthew 19:16)_ So forceful was the encounter of Jesus with this young man that it ended with a group of astonished disciples asking, “**Who then can be saved?**” (Matthew 19:25) To which Jesus responded, “**_With men this is impossible, but __with God all things are possible._**” (Matthew 19:26)

It would be the height of anti-Christian thinking to suggest that we merit our salvation by our excellent law-keeping. Yet at the same time a faith which has no regard for the law of God is not a saving faith—no matter what other religious activities or behavior people may comfort themselves with.

II. The Great Disappointment and Appeal

It would appear that the blindness of one’s own depraved condition extends past the grave. These disappointed would-be saints make their appeal, “**Lord, Lord, have we not. . .?**” They appeal to their great ability to prophesy, cast out demons, and do wonders. Their appeal is in the “we”. Apparently God is unimpressed.

But they have done this in His name (!)— like the Pharisee who was content in his own righteousness, who did not fail to give God credit saying,

_God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers. . . (Luke 18:11)

“Certainly, Lord, if you have infused me with such righteousness, that righteousness must be pleasing to you; if you have granted me such power, it must be a testimony that I have found favor in your eyes.” Not so.

Their confusion and disappointment would be warranted if they asked, “Lord, Lord, have you not. . .?” “Have you not applied the blood of Christ to my corrupt heart?” (cf. Colossians 1:14) “Have you not taken my

sins in your own body upon the tree?” (cf. 1 Peter 2:24) “Have you not justified?” (cf. Romans 8:33). Even earthly children gain much more ground if they appeal to the promise of their parents, rather than the merits of their own performance.

False Assurance

Hence a great disaster in the church. When the heart of the church is its numerical growth, the power of its leaders, or even the apparent successful lifestyles of its members, it is in danger of granting the disaster of false assurance. It is not praying ‘the sinner’s prayer’ nor the outward adherence to strict religion which grants us peace and assurance. The Westminster Confession accurately and succinctly addresses the issue:

Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favour of God, and estate of salvation¹ (which hope of theirs shall perish):² yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love Him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before Him, may, in this life, be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace,³ and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.^{4,5}

III. The Response

Depart

Jesus responds to the “Lord, Lord” appeal with the most nightmarish words imaginable, “. . .**depart from me.**” This should not be thought of as merely being ostracized from a club or clique. To depart from Jesus is to be eternally isolated from truth, life, peace, love, mercy and grace and heaven.

¹ Job 8:13–14, Micah 3:11, Deut. 29:19, John 8:41

² Matt. 7:22–23

³ 1 John 2:3, 1 John 3:14,18–19,21,24, 1 John 5:13

⁴ Rom. 5:2,5

⁵*The Westminster confession of faith*. 1996 (Chapter XVIII, 1). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

All that is good came into being, and exists in Christ. To depart from Christ is to depart from goodness and to be eternally immersed in darkness and death. Christ now calls sinners (Matthew 9:13) in that day He will drive them from Himself. Seek the Lord while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6).

Lawlessness

The reason Jesus gives for His rejection of these pseudo-saints is that He never⁶ knew them and that they practice lawlessness. Certainly in one respect we all practice lawlessness. The Apostle Paul writes, “. . .**for _all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. . .**” (Romans 3:23) But the indictment is quickly followed by the pardon “. . .**being justified __freely __by His grace _through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**” (Romans 3:24)

It is the terrible day of the Lord to stand before God clothed in one's own lawlessness. But to truly know Jesus is to be clothed in Him (1 Corinthians 5:3; Revelation 3:18). It is the man who adores himself as God who refuses to wear the proper uniform in battle. An independent warrior is not fighting for a defined master. The inappropriate nature of this is seen even in our own worldly rules of engagement. The protections of the Geneva Convention don't apply to non-military personnel.

When Jesus says “. . .**depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!**” we must recognize that He is not merely damning those who fail in their moral quests. It is the epitome of lawlessness to reject the law-giver. To reject His law is certainly to reject His grace, the end result being a darkened sinner trusting in the weak and shifting sands of his own feeble character. Against this Jesus lovingly calls us to an appropriation.

IV. Hear and Do

To hear the words of Christ and do them is to be wise and to build one's house on the rock. We are to believe in Christ.

And this is the will of Him who sent Me, __that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:40).

And we are to walk in His ways.

⁶ This may address the false notion of loss of salvation. It was not as if Jesus knew them for a time. . . He never knew them.

Nevertheless **__** the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “ **_** The Lord **__** knows those who are His, **_**” and, “ **_** Let everyone who names the name of **__** Christ depart from iniquity.” (2 Timothy 2:19)

...for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified. . . (Romans 2:13)

To hear and ignore the words of Christ is the acme of foolishness. Storms come, and we all endure them to some extent. The recent rains revealed small holes in some of our roofs; but all the houses on our blocks pretty much looked the same after the tender storm.

I don't think Jesus speaks here of our ability to endure the mild, and sometimes bitter, trials of this present age. The ultimate storm is the judgment of God. The rain comes from above, the wind blows from the side, the floods come from beneath and there is simply no escape.

Strong pagans abound. They often weather storms better than the faithful. But there is a storm they will not weather; it is the storm of the Lord's fixed gaze of judgment. The framework of our very bones will collapse. Like Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, who, when confronted with the mere finger of God, “**... the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other.**” (Daniel 5:6) Let us not lightly pass over such strong words when Jesus warns, “**And great was its fall.**”

Heaven and hell hang in the balance of our response to the teaching of Jesus. This is His claim! Which brings us to the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

V. The Authority

We learn

...that the people were astonished at His teaching,⁻²⁹⁻ for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (Matthew 7:28b, 29)

The scribes wrote the law. They had at their disposal the ultimate authority known. Yet their authority paled in comparison to the teaching of Christ. Disciplines, sheepskins, and degrees have their place. Today we might not be so inclined to trust in the scribes as we would be tempted to trust in the university scholar or man of science.

Academics have truly made great strides in understanding how things are made and how people can be healed. But it is quite another thing to trust them with our souls. I endeavor to speculate that most in the academic world would not wish to shoulder the burden of the souls of men while at the same time claiming to have unearthed ultimate truth.

Jesus made no bones about it.

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. (John 12:48)

In whom, my friend, will you trust your soul? Christ calls you to trust in Him.

But what does it say? —“The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach):⁻⁹⁻ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.⁻¹⁰⁻ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.⁻¹¹⁻ For the Scripture says, —“Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” (Romans 10:8-11)

Questions for Study

1. How does one know the will enter the kingdom of heaven (pages 2, 3)?
2. What is included in doing the will of the Father (pages 3, 4)?
3. Discuss the idea of meriting salvation. What was the rich young ruler's foolish mistake (page 4)?

4. What is the appeal made by those who don't seem to understand being restricted from the kingdom of heaven (pages 4, 5)?
5. Discuss false assurance and genuine assurance (page 5).
6. What does it mean to depart from Jesus (pages 5, 6)?
7. What is the epitome of lawlessness (page 6)?
8. How does one appropriate Jesus and His teachings (pages 6, 7)?
9. What are the blessings or curses to those who hear or refuse to hear the words of Christ (page 7)?
10. What is the ultimate storm (page 7)?
11. How did Jesus teach and what does that mean to you (page 8)?