

MEANINGLESS PROFESSIONS

Matthew 7:21-23

Intro: As the Lord continued to minister to His disciples, He pointed out that people have always been great talkers, great talkers about themselves, great talkers about what they have done. And since “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9), and since “out of the heart are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23), the mouth often expresses the deceitfulness that is man’s heart. Sometimes men intentionally intend to deceive; other times the person who is speaking is sincerely deceived, especially about himself, or about whatever he may express himself. What I mean is that often people intentionally try to deceive others, but on other occasions they are sincere in what they say, but they are self-deceived.

Notice in our text that the Lord was referring to what people say. Verse 21 begins, “Not every one that said unto me, Lord, Lord,” and so on. And then in verse 21 we read, “Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord,” and then go on to speak of what they have done, which they hope will have the Lord’s approval. But the significant thing about the people in both of these verses, is that they were wrong, and they were wrong about the most important matter that any human being can possibly face. The Lord was continuing to talk here about salvation, about entering the kingdom of heaven and becoming a part of it.

But the Lord indicated in these verses that there is a day coming when everyone will know the truth about himself and his relationship to God. He spoke of it in verse 22 as “in that day.” That is an expression that has to do with the day of judgment, the time when it will be too late to change if people have been wrong about what they have thought, and what they have had to say about themselves.

There is one book of the New Testament which deals with the subject of salvation, and how we can really know that we are saved so that we won’t be surprised “in that day,” or won’t be unmasked as a deceiver. I am speaking about the first epistle of John.

After his introductory remarks in the first five verses of chapter 1, the Apostle John began to speak about what people say, and what anyone of us could say. First, in verse 6 he said, “If we say that we have ...” And then in verse 8 he said, “If we say that we have ...” And then in verse 10,

the last verse of chapter 1 we have the same words, “If we say that we have ...” All of these statements must have been prominent in those days because we have heard people make the same statements in our day. Notice what the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 1:6-10. Then notice 1 John 2:4, 6, 9; 4:20.

Now it is very, very difficult to convince people that they are wrong. And before the Lord opened our eyes and our hearts to the truth, it was very difficult, if not impossible, to convince us that we were wrong. But this is why we need the Word of God, to open our eyes to the fact that in most cases they naturally are wrong about the issues in life that matter the most. I may go to visit a family whom I have never visited before, and get to their street, and turn left when I should have turned right, but that is easy to correct. But to be wrong about salvation, and go into eternity with a deceived heart, that is a tragedy that can never be reversed. Everything in life for all of us should be done with “that day” in mind.

Perhaps a person has the idea that he or she will get serious about God later on, but for some people that time never comes. We spend our days doing things that will amount to nothing “in that day,” while we have neglected to do that which will be important for all eternity. And in the case of the Gospel, to neglect the truth is to guarantee hell.

I remind you again that the Lord preached this message to His disciples. And this means that all of us who profess to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, need to listen carefully to these words of our Lord.

I think that if you will consider verses 21 and 22 carefully that you will see that the people the Lord was referring to in verse 21 had a problem regarding the meaning of faith, and the people He was speaking about in verse 22 had a problem with the meaning of works. Let us consider these verses carefully, seeking their meaning from the Lord, and then coming to the realization as to whether or not they apply to us.

I. THE TRUE MEANING OF FAITH (Matt. 7:21).

The Lord was indicating here that not everyone who called Him Lord, would enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now I am convinced in my own mind that the Lord was not speaking of His millennial kingdom, although the principle that the Lord was teaching applies to all of the provisions that God has made, or will make, for His people. The Lord was speaking

here about salvation, real salvation.

Now what can be said about a person who calls Jesus, Lord?

Well, we would have to say that he believes in the Deity of Jesus. He believes that Jesus was more than just an ordinary human being; he believes that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God Who became a man. And, as Dr. Hannah would say, "So far so good." Obviously you can't be a Christian if you do not believe that Jesus is God's Son. This person would heartily agree with what Peter said about the Lord: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Secondly, a person who calls Jesus "Lord," accepts the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wouldn't call Jesus "Lord" if he had doubts about the reliability of His teaching. And so we would say that this would be a person who believes the Bible. He is interested in Bible study. He goes to a church where he can hear the Bible taught.

And then for this person to call Jesus "Lord" would mean that he believes the Old Testament spoke of Christ and anticipated His coming. And so he would have no problem if you told him that Isaiah 53 spoke prophetically of the Lord.

And let me mention a fourth point: this person believes that the Lord is the only Savior. For him to say, "Lord, Lord," indicates his conviction that salvation is only through Christ. He, or she, would heartily agree with John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 and 1 John 5:11 and 12.

He might even be a pastor, a graduate of a theological seminary, or an elder in a church, or a deacon, or a Sunday School teacher.

So doctrinally and theologically we might not be able to find any problem with this person who called Jesus, not only "Lord," but "Lord, Lord," which seems to express his strong conviction about all of these things I have mentioned. He would have no problem at all with the sacrificial death and bodily resurrection of the Lord. He is thoroughly orthodox, and perhaps outspokenly orthodox.

And we would have to say that we are always encouraged when we hear anyone speak of Jesus as Lord, and even as the Lord Jesus Christ. And perhaps some of you are thinking, "Yes, but didn't the Apostle Paul say in

1 Cor. 12:3,

3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost”?

That is true, but Paul was speaking of a person who calls Jesus “Lord” as you and I have called Him in order that we might be saved. To say that a person is saved just because he or she is in doctrinal agreement with the Bible, is a perversion of the Gospel. Faith includes the doctrine, but saving faith includes person trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul expressed it in these words to the believers at Rome:

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).

You see, saving faith involves your heart. It is not just an intellectual agreement with the Bible. It includes that. But salvation is a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, where you are trusting Him and His death on the Cross, for the forgiveness of your sins and for the gift of eternal life. Salvation is God’s work in our hearts through the Lord Jesus Christ by which we are forever changed, saved, transformed, made new creatures in Christ.

Notice what the Lord said in Matthew 7:21. When a person is truly saved, he manifests that he has eternal life by doing the will of Jesus’ Father in heaven. Where do we find His will? It is in this book, the Bible. As I once heard it expressed by a dear man of God, “A Christian is not only one who believes the Bible, but he *behaves* the Bible. He seeks to live a life of obedience to God. Luke, in his Gospel, reported that the Lord said, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

In the verses in 1 John that we looked at, I hope you remember how the Apostle John touched on this very subject. Listen again to what he wrote in 1 John 2:4-6:

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

Let us all apply the test to our lives. If you say that you know the Lord, but you do not apply the commandments of Scripture to your own life, the Apostle John said, "You are a liar." And I think that he used strong language like that to wake any of us up who are depending upon our orthodoxy to save us, but not true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But let us move on to the next point:

II. THE TRUE MEANING OF WORKS (Matt. 7:22-23).

Now when you look at these words you can see that you again have people who make great claims with their lips, but they are claims that the Lord will reject in that day.

Now we can say the same things about what these people believed that we said about the people the Lord was speaking about in verse 21. Here are people who are perfectly orthodox. They believe in the Deity of Jesus. They believe His teaching. They have no argument with the Bible. And they even think that Jesus is the only Savior. *But these are people who add to all of that their own works.*

They ask the Lord three questions:

- 1) "Have we not prophesied in Thy Name?" These are preachers.
- 2) "Have we not ... in Thy Name cast out devils?" The translation should be *demons*.
- 3) "Have we not ... in Thy Name done many wonderful works?" This includes many other miracles in addition to delivering the demon-possessed.

Now Peter did all of these. So did the Apostle John. And even Paul performed these miracles. *But let me remind you that so did Judas Iscariot!*

Were these a proof of their salvation? Absolutely not! If you turn on to Matthew 12:24, you will see that the Pharisees were charging the Lord with casting out demons by the prince of demons, which would have been Satan. And the Lord responded with these words which are found in Matt. 12:27: "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?" Evidently there were others who were doing miraculous works in our Lord's day, but such works are no indication that the miracle worker knows the Lord. There are going to be a lot of signs and wonders in the last days, but that does not prove the miracle workers

are of God. In fact, the Scriptures indicate that it will be a part of Satan's last works before the end comes.

Judas Iscariot preached the Gospel. Judas Iscariot cast out demons. And Judas Iscariot did many other wonderful works. But Judas Iscariot was not a true child of God. In fact, he was a son of perdition, a child of hell. And he had all of the disciples fooled. Not a one of the apostles mentioned Judas when the Lord told them that one of them would betray Him. Judas did a perfect job of deceiving all of them except the Lord.

Beware of the person who always is talking about the good works he is doing, even how many people he has led to Christ. He may be a phony. We are saved "unto good works," but the only works that have anything at all to do with our salvation are the works of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And whatever good we may accomplish is only because of the Lord's working in us. Therefore, to Him belongs all of the glory.

These people address the Lord as the One Who is going to judge them. But what will He say to them? Read verse 23. The Lord says that their works were works of iniquity, and that He never knew them. It was not that they knew Him and then fell away; but they were phonies all along who never knew the grace of God in salvation.

Concl: In salvation we don't talk about what we have done for the Lord, but we talk about what He has done, and continues to do for us. The Devil and his demons all believe that Jesus is God. They have no question but that God's Word is true, although they try to get us to believe that it is a book full of lies. James tells us in James 2:19-21:

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

The point of our Lord's words is that saving faith is always accompanied by a changed life, a transformed life, a new life in Christ.

The Lord was speaking to His disciples about a subject that needs the attention of all of us who know the Lord. Let's not make the application

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just to someone we may know who professed to know Christ in the past, but is far from the Lord in every way today. But let us make the application to ourselves. It is a wonderful thing to be saved, but it is the will of God that we know that we are saved because of our desire to live each day to please and glorify Him.