

Are Just a Few Being Saved? Part 2

Scripture: Luke 13:22-30

Code: 42-185

Open your Bible to Luke if you will, Chapter 13; Luke Chapter 13. As we work our way through this book and the magnificence of it and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of His teaching, we come to a very riveting portion of scripture in which we see Jesus the evangelist calling people to become a true believer. Let me read the text, verses 22-30. Luke 13:22, "And He was passing through from one city and village to another teaching and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem. And someone said to Him, Lord are there just a few who are being saved? And He said to them, strive to enter by the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door saying Lord open up to us, then He will answer and say to you, I do not know where you're from. Then you will begin to say we ate and drank in your presence and you taught in our streets. And He will say I tell you I do not know where you are from. Depart from me all you evildoers. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves be cast out and they will come from east and west and from north and south and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. And behold some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last."

This is a frankly a heartbreaking portion of scripture. Now this is very difficult to accept to acknowledge. There's a sadness in this passage, because it is true that there are only a few who are being saved. And while we rejoice in our own salvation, we are profoundly saddened that we are only the few. Disappointment had begun to settle in to the hearts of the followers of Jesus. By this time, He's in the last year of His ministry, only a few months now before His death. He's been His way to Jerusalem since Chapter 9, verse 51, He'll finally arrive there in Chapter 19, verse 27. So we're in a period of time when He is circulating all around Judea, the southern part of Israel, going from town to town, village to village, city to city proclaiming the message of salvation and forgiveness. The message of salvation is the same as entering into the kingdom of God.

And as He goes, He does miracles. He overpowers demons. He overpowers disease and sometimes He overpowers death. Draws massive crowds of tens of thousand and multiples of tens of thousand. He is still the rage of Israel. He is still the most fascinating person ever to be seen or heard. He still

demonstrates a power unheard of. He still has an attractiveness that draw the masses. But the true believers are very few. In fact, the national leadership has rejected Him and they have determined that He is satanic, that He does what He does by the power of Satan and that He has to be stopped. In fact, He has to be murdered and they're already plotting His death. The populous for the most part is that some level of interest, but really for the most part they are either indifferent to the message of salvation or they are actually hostile to it so that on some occasions even in His own hometown, the people, not the leaders tried to kill Him.

It is becoming increasingly clear now in the third year of His ministry with all that has gone in the past that the populous will not receive Him. That what John says about Him is true. He came to His own, His own received Him not. He was in the world. The world was made by Him. The world knew Him not. It is becoming clear to His followers that they are a few. That they are a little flock as Jesus calls them. That they are a remnant. All of those initial Messianic exhilarating expectations that the followers of Jesus had that He was going to sweep in and establish the kingdom and all the nation would fall at His feet. He would overpower the Romans and establish the kingdom promised to David with all the blessings promised to Abraham. This great Messianic ideal was beginning to be a very, very faint hope.

There wasn't any glory. There wasn't any splendor. The nation had turned against Him. The leaders are plotting His death. Both He and His messenger being rejected. They knew why He came. He came to save and that's why the question comes in verse 23, "Lord are there just a few who are being saved?" They knew what His ministry was. They knew what His message was. It was salvation. That's what He was preaching. That's what He was talking about. When He talked about the kingdom of God, He was not talking about some future time, some future kingdom. He wasn't talking about the millennial kingdom as we know it. The kingdom is the sphere of salvation. He was offering salvation. He was offering people entrance into the realm over which He is king. And which He rules His subjects in righteousness and grants to them forgiveness and eternal life.

His message was salvation. They knew that He came to seek and save the lost. He came to save. But the lost, for the most part, refused Him. It wasn't that they didn't want salvation and they didn't want the kingdom and they didn't want heaven. It was that they wouldn't admit their sin. They wouldn't admit that they were self-righteous. They wouldn't abandon their false religion. They wouldn't repent. They wouldn't deny themselves. They wouldn't confess Him as Lord. Only a few were being saved. That was clear. Though the crowds were massive. That some of the disciples had even seen groups of disciples abandon Him when He said certain things that offended them. Such as in the 6th Chapter of John when many of His disciples left and walked no more with Him.

So the early anticipation of what the Messianic ministry was going to be was really fading. And only a few were really true believers. And so the question comes in verse 23, "Lord are there just a few who are being saved? It's a question that we would ask today. Yesterday in Mexico City at a pastor's conference, I did a question and answer session and a gentleman asked this question. "Why is it that only a few will come and respond to the gospel where false teachers and false healers can have crowds in the tens of thousands? When someone preaches the gospel only a few come?" It's the same question. Why only a few?

We ask that question just the way they ask the question then. Look how Jesus answered it. He never really said well, here's the reason. He never really said well, here's the number. He said, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." It's irrelevant what the number is. It's irrelevant what the percentage is. What is relevant is that you be saved. And so what happens is the question launches Jesus into an invitation to salvation. Our ministry is just at this point to be understood. As a church, we have the same ministry. The apostles have the same ministry Jesus had. The same ministry all true followers and true believers in the gospel have had. We have the responsibility to go unto all the world, preach the gospel, compel sinners, who are lost, to be saved. That's what we do.

And so here is a model invitation. Usually when you go to a church and you hear an evangelist or a preacher and he gives the gospel and he gives an invitation, he says this come down here or pray this little prayer, say these words, ask Jesus to come into your heart and you need to just invite Him into your heart and He'll come. That's not what Jesus said. That's not what He said. His invitation here is very different than any I hear or have heard in my experience.

Jesus says "strive to enter the narrow door." And the word He uses, agonisma, means to fight, to compete, to battle. You want to be saved do you? Then the war is on. The battle over your soul is now raging. And He goes on to say you have to agonize, you have to fight "for many I tell you will seek to enter and will not be able." They will not fight to defeat their own pride, self-righteousness, love of sin, their own will, their own desire to control their lives. They will not win the battle over their own will. The battle over their own flesh, the battle over their own sin. And they will not enter into the kingdom. They will not be saved.

That's really one of the most frightening statements that Jesus ever made, that many people are going to want to be saved and aren't going to be saved. Because they lost the battle. And we looked at that a little bit last time, so we won't go over all of it. But everybody understood why Jesus came. Everybody understood why and that was to call sinners to salvation. But I don't think church today

really does understand what the right invitation should be. I don't hear evangelists say fight to receive salvation. Battle to be saved. It all seems so easy. But here is the model invitation.

And we have to get this right folks. We have to get the gospel right and the invitation correct. That's why tonight I'm going to talk about what is saving faith. What is the kind of faith that triumphs in this war. A perverted gospel gets us nowhere. A corrupted gospel gets us nowhere. An altered gospel gets us nowhere but into hell. That is why there was a reformation. That is why we are Protestants, because we protested a corrupted gospel. A false corrupted gospel can't save and neither can a shallow faith.

There are a lot of people who want to be saved that are not going to be saved. The disciples understood the Lord's mission was to save. And the Lord says let me clarify how one enters. Let me tell you what's important is not how many. That's in the counsel of God. That's for a sovereign God to determine. What is important is that you're there. This is a sober, honest, severe, threatening, frightening invitation intended to produce a level of panic in the soul. This is an invitation that is intended to make the sinner panic. To produce fear. It's really a far cry from God loves you and wants to connect with you so you can fulfill all your personal dreams.

Our Lord gives an invitation that I've broken down with four words. The first word would be exertion, then desperation, then union, and then, or relation, and then I'll choose the word perception. Let me open that up to you. First one, the Lord's invitation calls for spiritual exertion; spiritual exertion. And that's what we've been saying. Verse 24, we covered it last time, strive, agonisma, fight, battle, to get in the narrow door. It's a narrow door. You have to give up everything. Jesus said, you want to come after me do you? You want to be in my kingdom? Deny yourself, deny your family, be willing to give up everything. If you don't hate your mother, your father, your sister, your brother and even your own life, if you're not willing to give up all your possessions, if you're not willing to recognize your sin, if you're not willing to come broken and penitent and contrite, you're not going to enter the kingdom.

In Matthew Chapter 7 He said, "the door is narrow, the way is narrow and few there be that find it." And just finding it is difficult in the cacophony of voices that exist in the world in terms of false religion and corrupted gospel. But even if you did find it, it's difficult to get in it. Most people find it much easier to go on the broad road. Jesus said there's also a broad gate and a broad way. You can carry all your junk on there. You can take your sin on there. You can take your selfishness on there. You can take your religion on there. You can take your self-righteousness on there. You can take it all on there. You don't have to leave anything behind. It says heaven, but it goes to hell. The broad road leads to destruction.

Frankly, it's sad to say, but many people are calling themselves Christians and are offering people the broad road. No you don't have to worry about repentance. You don't have to worry about confessing your sin. You don't have to worry about self-hate, self denial, cross-bearing and obedience to Christ. You don't worry about being broken and contrite and humbled. Just pray this little pray and zap you're on your way to heaven. That's a broad road and it leads to destruction. Jesus said to get...to find the gate is hard enough because you have to find the true gospel. Once you find it to get through it is a great challenge because it's war in your soul. You are fallen. You love your sin. You love your selfishness. You love to control your life. You want what you want. The gospel doesn't come along and accommodate that. That's not the gospel. The gospel is not Jesus wants to come to you and make you everything you want to be. That's not the gospel.

Gospel is give up everything you are, everything you hope, everything you dream and want to be. Abandon yourself completely to God and His sovereign grace and purpose. This is a real battle in the soul. It's the battle to repent. It's the battle to be penitent and broken and contrite. It's the battle to be unselfish, selfless, to give up control. It's the battle to abandon sin. In James 4, he says, "Weep, wail, be miserable, turn your laughter into tears because God gives grace to the humble, but He resists the proud." This is the battle. It's the battle of self-denial. It's the battle to give up everything to the Lordship of Christ.

So what Jesus says to the sinner is you want to come to salvation, you want to be saved? Then battle. Battle in your heart, because as I told you last time in Matthew and Mark and Luke, Jesus said on different occasions, if you keep your own soul, you lose it. If you lose your soul, you gain it. And that's the battle. It's a battle for control over you. Salvation comes to those who lose the battle, who give up, who pound their breasts and say God be merciful to me a sinner.

So the Lord's invitation begins with a command to fight for salvation, great battle of the will. If you go back far enough in the history of the church and great preaching of the reformers and the puritans you read about these immense, spiritual struggles that went on the heart. We have such a superficial approach to Christianity today. We've got all kinds of people running around who think they're Christians because they prayed a little prayer. There never was any battle. So the first thing He talked about and that was last week, spiritual exertion. The second thing He talks about is, I guess you could call it temporal desperation. Desperation's a keyword, verse 25.

"Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door and you begin to stand outside and knock the door saying Lord open up to us." Now we'll stop right there. This is a frightening reality. You want

to get into the kingdom. The kingdom has a door. The door is narrow. Listen to this, "and the door can be shut." Who shuts the door? Well, it must be Christ because when the door is shut the people left out complain and they say Lord, open the door.

So it's obvious who shut the door. The Lord shut the door. This is the idea that there's a sense of desperation here we're talking about or urgency. Because we have limited time, that's why I call it temporal desperation. Our time is limited. Genesis 6:3, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." I mean in the time of the flood God said that. Look I'm not going to take this stuff for good. I'm not going to take this forever. The day's going to come when it's going to be over and you don't know when it's going to happen and then, it started to rain. And then the door of the ark was shut and the whole of the world was drowned in judgment.

At some point, it's over. It may be if you go back to Chapter 12, you can see this, it may be death. Go back to Chapter 12, verse 20, this rich fool who, you know, had so much, he was so rich that, in verse 18 "he was going to tear down his barns and build bigger barns and store all his grain and goods, very selfish. And he said I'll say to my soul, soul you have many goods laid up for many years to come take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. Live it up man, you've got it all." God said, "And you fool, this very night your soul is required of you and now who will own what you have prepared." You fool.

You don't know when you're going to die. It might be just when you've amassed everything you've been trying to amass your whole life. It might be just the day after you got it all. You don't know when death is going to come. In fact, in the 13th Chapter and verse 3, Jesus was answering a question on the minds of the people about some Galileans who were in the temple worshiping God and they got massacred by Pilate's soldiers. And they wanted to know are these people worse than other people, is that why they got massacred? Is that...how do we understand these kind of catastrophic things.

And Jesus said, look, the message is "I tell you no, they aren't worse than anybody else, but unless you repent, you'll all likewise perish. And then they brought up the issue of a tower that fell over on people down in Siloam and killed 18 people in verse 4. Verse 5, He says, "I tell you they're not any worse than anybody else, but unless you repent, you'll all likewise perish." The lesson is you don't know when you're going to die and when you die it's over. It's appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment, the door is shut.

We don't know when that's going to happen. That's why down in verse 58 of Chapter 12, the Lord gives an analogy. He says look "if you're going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate,

you're going to go to court and you know you're guilty on your way, make an effort to settle with him so he doesn't drag you before the judge, the judge turn you over to the constable and the constable throw you into prison." Look it's better to negotiate a deal on the way while you still have time. You better take care of these kinds of matters before you face God when it's too late.

And in verse 6 of Chapter 13, man had a fig tree, planted it in his vineyard, came to look for fruit on it, could find any. He said to the vineyard keeper, "I've been coming for three years trying to find some fruit on this fig tree. Haven't found any, cut it down." Why does it even use up the ground? And he answered and said to him, "let it alone sir, this year too until I dig around it and put in fertilizer. If it bears fruit next year, fine, if not cut it down. Give me one more year." And Jesus is saying you're all living on borrowed time. You've had the bulk of it, you've had the three years. I'm giving you one more year. You're all living on borrowed time. You don't know when the borrowed time is up. Jesus said that of Israel. They were the fig tree and the borrowed time was almost up.

It was 70 A.D. three decades after Jesus said those kinds of things that the Romans came and massacred hundreds of thousands of Jews. Destroyed Jerusalem, went through in years subsequent to that and sacked 985 towns and villages killing and pillaging people. It was almost the end of their time and the door was shut. Then you have to ask too, Chapter 12, verse 40, "be ready for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Not only do you not know when you're going to die, you don't know when the Lord's going to come. You don't know that. He comes in an hour when you don't think. He comes in an hour when you don't plan. He comes like a thief in the night. The idea of a thief in the night is he comes expectedly.

Furthermore, you don't know when God is just going to get weary of your unbelief. God doesn't have endless patience. Romans 1, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all those who've suppressed the truth. You suppress the truth and God has an end to His patience. And so in verse 24, it says He gave them up. Verse 26, He gave them up. Verse 28 of Romans 1, He gave them up. He gave them up. That is a very sentence. The door can be shut any time God wants to shut it. He has the power of life and death. He knows when His Son is coming. And at any point He desires, He can say grace is over and turn you over to the consequence of your sin with no hope of salvation.

Matthew 25, look at it for a moment. Here's a very graphic illustration of this by our Lord in a parable He gave about ten virgins. This again, the kingdom of heaven, the sphere of salvation, the realm of salvation is comparable to ten virgins. They take their lamps and go out to meet the bridegroom. This is supposed to be a wedding celebration. The bride is waiting, she has her ten ladies with her. They're all waiting for the bridegroom to come. They weren't as precise in those days. Weddings didn't

happen at 6:30 on Thursday, etc., etc., because they weren't able to make the preparations with that kind of precision. And they happened when all the preparations were finally made.

Guests were pre-invited months in advance. And then when the event was supposed to happen, the bridegroom shows up, the guests are all then gathered and it happens. So they're all there in waiting. That's why they were called ladies in waiting, not only waiting on the bride, but waiting, of course, with everybody for the event. Five were foolish, five were wise, foolish took their lamps, but no oil. Wise took oil along with their lamps. Bridegroom is delaying. They all get drowsy. They begin to sleep. At midnight there's a shout. Behold the bridegroom, come out to meet Him. All those virgins arose, trimmed their lamps. The foolish said the wise, give some of your oil to us, our lamps are going out. Prudent answered saying or the wise said there's no...not enough for you and us as well. Go to the dealers, the store and buy some for yourselves. While they were trying to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, those who were ready went in with Him to the wedding feast, the door was shut.

Same imagery. Now these are...these people are associated with the bride. They're associated with the bridegroom. They're connected to the church. They're connected to the kingdom externally. They're there. They've got all their garb on, they're ready to go. They just don't have any internal reality. There's no life. And so they say, Lord, Lord, open up for us. Hey, hey, hey, we're on the outside. He answered and said, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you. Who are you?" Be on the alert for you don't the day, nor the hour. You don't know when the door's going to shut.

You don't know when you're going to be on the outside banging on the door. It shuts. And it's never going to open again. And we're all living on borrowed time and you don't know when it's up. And there are so many religious people like that. The Jews were that. That's what He's saying. Go back to Luke 13. That's what He's saying. It's you I'm talking about. You religious people who have been exposed to me and my ministry. And when they're left out, shock sets in. And verse 25 says, you begin to stand outside and knock on the door saying Lord open up to us. This is an echo of the parable of the virgin. Hey, hey, hey, bang, bang, bang, what are we doing out here? This is metaphoric. This is figurative. There isn't actually a physical door. There isn't actually an interchange between the damned and God.

But this is symbolic of their shock, of their surprise of their horror, of their disappointment, of their frustration. They didn't strive. They didn't battle. They never did give up themselves. They kept their lives and so they lost them eternally. And so there they are standing outside, present tense banging, banging, banging. What are we doing out here? Part of the remorse of hell is going to be the shock of it. Hell is populated by people who are stunned to find themselves there, shocked, overwhelmed.

They feel like they've been cheated. Like they've been overlooked, like they've been forgotten. Like something's wrong. Like they're innocent.

The religious Jews certainly in view here professing; Christians who are a part of Christendom. Many of them leaders and teachers. They've been around Jesus. They've even used His name. They've...what are they doing here. What are we doing here? This is essentially an element of hell. It's remorse and it's shock and it's the stunning realization that you're somewhere where you're not supposed to be. Now you don't know when it's going to happen, so Jesus once said "while it is day." While it is day, while you have the opportunity.

And Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:2-3 says it as clearly as it can be said. "Behold now is the hour of salvation." Today is the day of salvation. You have today, that you know. Tomorrow, you don't know. Now is the day of salvation. Our Lord's invitation then demands exertion, the battle of the soul, and a sense of desperation because time is very limited. You don't know when you're going to die. You don't know when the Lord's going to come and you don't know when God's going to say that's it, door is shut.

There's a third element to His invitation, let's call it union or relation. Why are they shut out? Verse 25, why are they shut out? When they cried Lord, open to us? Then He will answer and say to you, "I do not know where you're from." It's exactly what the bridegroom said in the parable of the virgins. "I don't know you." It's Matthew 7 again, verses 21-23. "Many will say Lord, Lord," you know, "we've preached in your name, we cast out demons in your name, we did many works in your name and I will say to them depart from me, I never knew you." Who are you? You lay no claim on me. That is a way of saying I've no union with you. I've no relation to you.

Salvation requires a shared life. It is to be in Christ and have Christ in us so that there is no way to even divide that. "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not either Christ lives in me and the life which I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." My life in Christ mingled the life that I live is Christ. For to me to live is Christ.

Paul over and over again says we are in Christ. We are in Christ. Then comes back and says Christ is in us. Christ is in us. This is an intimate profound spiritual relationship in which we share eternal life. The very life of Christ is in us. The Spirit of Christ dwells in us. Christ, Himself, in the form of the Spirit has taken up residence in me. I am in Christ, Christ is in me. He says, I don't have any relationship with you. We have no such union. You are not united to me in my death, burial and resurrection. You're not buried with me in death and raised with me in resurrection.

I don't know where you're from, but you're not from, but you're not from my kingdom. You're not part of my family. This is the most pathetic response imaginable. Their banging the door. This is the picture of the remorse of the inhabitants of hell who had been religious and have been associated with Judaism, associated with Christianity. And they're saying wait a minute, what are we doing out here. Not everybody's going to be in this situation because the world is full of people who have perished without salvation who had no association with Judaism and no association with Christianity, but for those who did, the shock that's going to constitute perhaps one of the greatest suffering elements of eternal judgment.

The horror that you were so close and now you're so far forever. The horror that you had an opportunity and you didn't take it, because you wouldn't give up control of your own life, your own self-righteousness, your own sin, your own pride. That's part of the remorse and the agony is hell. I don't know you. I don't know where you're from, but you're not from my kingdom. And they answer, verse 26, "Then you will begin to say we ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets." And the vernacular, hey we hung out. We hung out. We were there. You know we ate, we drank, we had meals together. Sometimes you even created the food.

We were part of the group. We were in the crowd. We went with you. We were down there by the sea when you were teaching. We were up there on the hill when you were teaching and we were there in the town square when you were teaching, you know, we were there. We heard you. We even had meals with you, because meals are part of life and Jesus teaching from place to place and town to town to town was eating with people all the time. How could He not be eating with people. How could isolate Himself from people? Tens of thousands of people were in His presence. Tens of thousands of people were with Him in the streets. And tens of thousands of people must have been eating where He was eating and if He had a meal with somebody it was sort of like He developed a relationship. That's what meals were for in the ancient world.

And we don't know anything about that in America, you know, it's just gulp and then you're gone. It's a different world, you know, it's as fast as you can. You inhale your food and your blast off to the next deal. But it's not that way in the rest of the world. In many places it's not that way. As I said, I was just in Mexico and I said...I finished teaching one day, I don't know, Friday at 1 o'clock or something. They said "well we're going to lunch" and said "well, good because I need some time to study, because I've got to preach on Sunday and I need to do some work." And they said "well lunch is from...well we're leaving at 1:30. Lunch will be till from 4:00, from now till 4:00."

And I said, "What?" I said, "How much food are we going to consume?" I mean, I can usually do lunch in ten minutes. If I have that much time, I mean, I won't be able to wake up for two days if...but what I found out was we went to this table and there were 25 of us sitting around this table and they put on a wonderful lunch. And first came these appetizers that was all just really delicious stuff and I was enjoying and good fresh bread and all kinds of good things. And then came the main meal, you know, nice piece of dead cow, which I enjoyed thoroughly. And then they brought this big dessert and it was really good. And I thought in my mind, I added up of the two and a half hours, you know, between when we started this deal and finally ended it, how much time was I actually eating. It was about 12-13 minutes.

What was the rest about? I mean, I'm used to taking the 12-13 minutes and then getting out of there to get on life. It was finding out everything I wanted to know and a whole lot that I didn't want to know about everybody around me. Isn't it what it is? I mean, that was life. And so when you had a meal, it was like, because it was so hard to prepare a meal, there was so much involved in preparing a meal, you savored it all and you dwelled on it and it was a social deal. And if you had a meal with somebody, boy you had time with them. You got to know them. It was face to face time. And that's how it was in the ancient times.

They actually got so into their meals they reclined. They were lying down eating. That's sort of a meal nap conversation combination. And they said, you know, when they said we hung out they weren't talking about, you know, we grab some fast food at the same drive thru. They were talking about we had time with you. We sat down with you. We heard you. We liked it. You healed some of our relatives. You healed my son. You cast a demon out of my aunt. You...we heard You teach and we liked it. It was fabulous to hear and we don't get it. What are we doing in hell?

And then on the other side, the Matthew 7 people will say wait, we preached in Your name. We ran a big church. We had a big Christian institution here, here. We even had an exorcism deal. We did all kinds of great things in the name of Jesus Christ. I don't know you. You're not in my kingdom. And then He says, what drives a knife through the heart, the crushing finality, "depart from me all you evildoers, you unrighteous." That's the issue. They were never covered by the righteousness of God through faith in Christ. They weren't justified.

It wasn't that they were evil and we're not. It's that they weren't covered and we are. They weren't justified, covered by the righteousness of God through faith in Christ. They weren't righteous. So they were left as evildoers. He says, "Depart." This is final. By the way, that's a quote from Psalm 6:8.

Jesus is quoting Psalm 6:8. "Out of my presence." "Out of my presence forever." I don't have any relation with you. There's no real union with you. And the real union with Christ is by grace alone through faith alone, grace alone faith alone. If you throw works in there and ritual and ceremony and self-righteousness, it's damning. I don't have a relationship with you.

And the departure is eternal. This is the final sentence. They are unholy. They are unrighteous. And they are the everlastingly unblessed. No real repentance and no real saving faith. And you know what? There are millions of people in the world today who hang out around Jesus. They hang out around the institutions and organizations and elements of Christendom that use His name. But He doesn't know them. There's a final element to His invitation.

He calls for exertion, desperation, and union. And finally, the word perception, eternal perception. Having said "Depart from me all you evildoers," it's as if He threw them into hell. And verse 28 then says, "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there. When you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but yourselves being cast out and they will come from east and west and north and south and recline at the table for the kingdom of God." And our Lord says look, you have to have an eternal perspective.

Salvation...do you know that He says nothing about their family life. He says nothing about their personal success. Nothing about their personal purpose or ambition or desire or goals or objectives. Nothing about their personal wellbeing in this life. He says nothing about it at all. Nothing about health. Nothing about wealth. Nothing about prosperity. Nothing about any of those kinds of personal elements. He says the issue here is this, you're going to end up in hell. That's what the issue is. He is calling the person to an eternal perception. Any legitimate invitation calls for that spiritual exertion; that sense of temporal desperation; that relational union and that eternal perception. We're talking here folks about your eternity. That's what we're talking about. Seeing beyond this life. The gospel is not about this life. It's about eternity. And the language again is vivid and figurative.

These people who have figuratively been shut out have been banging away saying hey what happened, what happened. We don't belong here and they have been confirmed that they're in the place where they should be. "Depart from me all you evildoers." They're going to be experiencing, it says, weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is the grinding of remorse. That remorse, that agony will be composed of elements of surprise, shock that the Jews are there. That people who name the name of Christ are there. They're going to be shocked. All kinds of people, millions of people are going to be shocked that they're in hell.

It's not just the absence of blessing. It's not just the pain of punishment. It's the experience of remorse. And the more you knew about the gospel, the more profound the remorse. That's why the greater punishment comes to those who trample underfoot the blood of the covenant. It isn't that God necessarily cranks up the pain, it's that the pain is related to the level of rejection. If you knew the truth and rejected the truth, then all the more remorse. All the more grinding. All the more wailing and weeping.

Hell is about remorse. It's about agonizing regret. And it's even compounded because you will realize that some are included in the kingdom, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets, they're all in the kingdom of God and yourselves are cast out. You see the Jews needed to hear that because they prided themselves on being the children of Abraham and of course, the covenant went from Abraham through his son Isaac rather than his son Ishmael, the illegitimate son. And it went through Isaac to Jacob whose name is changed to Israel. And so as children of those three, they were children of the covenant, children of the promise, children of the kingdom. They expected to be saved and they're going to realize that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are in the kingdom.

How are they going to know that? Are they going to look through a crack in the door? No, but they're going to know they're not in hell. The prophets that they killed and persecuted including Jesus, there's going to be remorse. That remorse will be compounded because there will be those that they know are receiving all the blessings of the kingdom. It's going to be true for false Christians too. They're going to be...they're going to know that we're not there. They're going to know that the true believers are enjoying the kingdom of God while they're grinding their teeth in remorse over their unwillingness to abandon their deception and their lie and their self-will and their self-righteousness to fall at the foot of Jesus and pound their breast and say God be merciful to me a sinner and save me.

Apparently then in hell there is some knowledge of what has been lost. And there is some knowledge of those that are not there and therefore are known to be in the kingdom of blessing. To make it worse for the Jews, verse 29 says, "And they," meaning Gentiles, "will come from the east and west and north and south and recline at the table in the kingdom of God." This is too much. Some of the sons of Abraham are going to be in hell realizing that the kingdom of God is full of Gentiles. This is just over the top. That's a knife to their pride. They were supposed to be a nation to witness to the Gentiles. They became so proud that they began to hate the Gentiles.

And so our Lord says, how sad. You're going to be cast out ekbolos. It's to throw. You're going to be thrown by God as far away as He can throw you and the kingdom is going to be opened to people

from the four corners of the world. That's not...that shouldn't have surprised them at all. That shouldn't surprise anybody because in Psalm 107, for example, and I'm not going to take time to go through 30 scriptures that teach this, it's all over the place, but a couple of them. Psalm 107, verse 1, "Oh give thanks to Lord for He's good. His loving kindness is everlasting. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so whom," listen, "He is redeemed from the hand of the adversary and gathered from the lands, from the east, from the west, from the north, from the south." From the very beginning God intended to redeem people from every corner of the earth.

It wasn't that He wanted to redeem only Israel. They were just the nation, the witness nation, to take the message to the world. And so it is the same today, there are going to be many people who think they're Christians who claim to be Christians, but are false Christians. They're going to be shut out of the kingdom. And the ones that they had no regard for and no respect for are going to be there enjoying the blessing of God's kingdom.

Jesus said in Matthew 8, "I say to you," verse 11, "many shall come from east and west and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness. In that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." So the Gentiles are going to be in and said tragically, you're going to be out. This whole idea of weeping and gnashing of teeth was a part of Jesus teaching and I just read you Matthew 8, verse 12. Listen to Matthew 13, verse 42.

"Cast them into the furnace of fire. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Verse 50, "Cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Again in Chapter 22 of Matthew and verse 13, the same theme. "The king said to the servants, bind him hand and foot, cast him into the outer darkness in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

In Jesus' teaching in Matthew 24 in verse 51, He says, "cut him in pieces, assign him a place with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Chapter 25, again in verse 30, the same thing. "Cast the worthless slave into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The grinding remorse of being left out is indicated in all those passages I just read. This is the horror of expecting to end up in heaven only to find yourself in hell.

The conscious torment of that kind of remorse is a grinding and relentless frustration. And so Jesus says, you need to come into the kingdom by winning the war over yourself. You need to come into the kingdom soon, urgently, because you don't know how much time you have. You need to come into a true union with Jesus Christ by faith alone through grace alone and get rid of your self-righteousness

and your works. And you need to have a view of eternity and understand that this salvation is about your forever. So that the tone of this entire invitation is really a very serious warning. We are so reluctant to do that. Just so reluctant to do that as if somehow we can't say anything that might make somebody feel bad. Well, Jesus made people either feel bad and repent or feel furious and react.

Verse 30, final statement familiar words from Jesus. "Behold some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last." This is the shock of Gentile salvation and Jews being left out. Some of the Jews who were first in God's plan to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, some of the Jews are going to be last and some of the Gentiles who were last, they came second, are going to be first. What does that mean? In the kingdom, first is last and the last is first means everybody is what? Is the same. Everybody's equal. This is another shock. Jew and Gentile equal in the kingdom. The realm of salvation there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free.

They'll all enjoy the things of salvation and you won't. The whole point is that you don't need to know whether it's few or many, that's for God to know. But you need to know it's a great battle and you need to agonize in the battle. You need to know that you have a limited time. You're living on borrowed time. And the door can be shut and it will be. You need to know that this calls not for something superficial, but a true union with Christ so that you know Him intimately and He knows you. And you need to live in the light of eternity because salvation is rescuing you from eternal remorse and torment and placing you at God's big banquet.

The Jews always thought, and so did people in the ancient Near East and they always thought of the greatest event as a banquet. That was the greatest event in life. Wedding feasts or some great occasion to have a feast. This is a symbol of the blessedness of heaven and fellowship with God. Indeed it is heartbreaking word from our Savior. It is. And it made Jesus weep to look at Jerusalem and say I wanted to gather you, but you wouldn't. Verse 34 in this same chapter, we're going to get to it next week. "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets, stones those sent to her how often I wanted to gather your children together just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you wouldn't have it." It's a pain to me, it's a grief to me. It's a grief to Him as well.

Most people lack the true repentance. They lack the true contrition, the true brokenness. They are void of urgent desperation. They don't have a true relationship to Jesus Christ. They just hang around Jesus as it were. And they do not know what it means to bow to that which is eternal. To be concerned about that. They want a gospel that doesn't ask for repentance. They want a gospel that has no threats. They want a gospel that allows them to have some superficial attachment to Jesus, but not a bowing to His absolute sovereignty at any cost. They want a gospel that fixes them in this

world to make them more comfortable. That's not it. And that's not what Jesus offers. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, this is such a hard and such a powerful message for our Lord. It leaves us shaken and we know what Jesus is saying. We understand it. We get it. It seems like so many don't. It's so tragic that it's hard to even find the true message. And then hard to battle through it to come to the right response. Can't be done without Your Spirit, we know that. And when it's all said and done our wills can never be broken. We can never get the sense of eternity, the sense of true desperation that leads to repentance and faith. We can never have a true union with Christ unless the Spirit of God works mightily. The credit goes to Him and yet it's never apart from our willingness. Jesus said you will not come that you might have life. You won't come. It's sad.

It does appear that only a few are being saved. Help us to be faithful to know that we are among them and to be faithful to proclaim the gospel to others. Lord as Jubilent sung a little while ago we are like a motherless child in this world, this is not our place our life is with You, our affections are in heaven, our inheritance is there, our Lord is there, the saints are there, our Father is there, a place is there prepared for us. Father, we look forward to that heavenly land. Thanking You that You have brought us the truth so that we can become true believers hoping for that which You've prepared for those that love You. We want to gather around the banquet. We want to be in that eternal blessedness. Father we pray that You will deliver people who are still without a relationship to Christ, without a true knowledge of Christ, without an intimate relationship with You so that they will not be shut out forever and left in remorse and bitterness.

Do Your work as only You can do it and may all our hearts respond to You. You are a worthy God and a glorious Savior. We thank You for the salvation You offer in Your Son's name, Amen.

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