Grace to You :: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time

The Ultimate Religious Decision

Scripture: Luke 6:46-49

Code: 42-90

Let's open our Bibles to the sixth chapter of Luke's gospel. We come to the final verses of this chapter, really the conclusion of the sermon of our Lord. One of the dangers in Bible exposition done with some measure of depth is that it takes months for me to preach a sermon that Jesus preached on one occasion. And sometimes we're left because we go carefully and thoughtfully and deeply through the text, we're left with just of a conclusion. And for those who haven't been with us, there is a lot that has been lost in the weeks moving us up to verse 46.

Jesus was primarily a preacher. Yes He did miracles, physical miracles. Yes He cast out demons, spiritual miracles. Yes He lived an exemplary life and manifested grace and kindness, the likes of which no man ever manifested. But apart from His miracle power and apart from His example, He was primarily a preacher. Never then are you closer to the passion of Jesus, to the heart of God then when you are listening to Him preach.

He preached a sermon known to us as the Sermon on the Mount. That sermon finds its most expansive representation in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. But Luke also gives us excerpts from that sermon. It is likely that Matthew and Luke are writing about the same sermon. It is also possible that it was a sermon like all sermons which bear the truth that was repeated on many occasions. There's only one gospel, there's only one message of truth. Every time Jesus preached He therefore preached the same gospel and it is no stretch to assume that He may well have used the same analogies, the same parables, the same illustrations as He went from place to place.

And so, what we have in the record of Luke could well be the very same day, the same place on the hillside in Galilee where the Sermon on the Mount, as it's called in Matthew 5 to 7, took place. There are some variations, which I noted for you. Those could be understood by the fact that Jesus in preaching the sermon would have said much more than Luke records and much more than Matthew records, either of which could be read in a matter of minutes...no doubt He spoke for a long time so that He may have cycled back through and rephrased things which would explain some of the differences. Or it is possible that the message in Luke occurred on a different occasion, built around the same truth which desperately needed to be repeated since, for one thing, there was no tape ministry in those days.

And so we come to really what is the end of the sermon. I would remind you, if you're interested in the real details of the sermon, when I went through the gospel of Matthew some years ago, I spent

about a year in the Sermon on the Mount. I am spending about a month in it this time. There's no need to repeat all of that expansive material that is drawn out of Matthew's presentation of the sermon because it's been done. You can read the commentaries on that section in Matthew, you could listen to the tapes if you want the depth of that series. It is in my mind the most rich portion of the gospel record, Matthew 5 to 7. Luke's briefer account does, however, focus on the issues that are at hand in the sermon. And what we're going to do is stick with those and not get nearly as expansive as we did when we went through Matthew.

So let's come to the end of the sermon. Familiar words, verse 46, "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts upon them, I'll show you whom he is like. He is like a man building a house who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock and when a flood rose, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it because it had been well built. But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly is like the man who built a house upon the ground without any foundation and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed and the ruin of that house was great."

By the way, that's very, very similar to the way Jesus ended the sermon as Matthew records it, which leads us to believe it well could be the same sermon or the same sermon repeated on another occasion. Jesus ends His sermon with an analogy, with an illustration, with a very vivid picture of two kinds of lives, one that survives judgment and one that does not. It is then a decision that has to be made at the end of His sermon...which of the two lives do you desire to live? Do you want to survive judgment or do you not?

There are a lot of decisions that people make and consider to be very important to them. There are decisions about physical well being, decisions about diet, about medical care, life style. Decisions about career. Decisions about certain purchases that have weight because they stay on your credit card for a long time as you pay them off in increments or whatever may be the means of payment. So you have to think a long time before you decide you're going to commit yourself to something long term. There are educational decisions that are made, decisions in terms of relationships that are being made about who you're going to marry, who you're going to associate with, who you're going to partner with, etc., etc.

And, of course, the most important decision you ever make is the one that has the most impact, the one that has the most enduring effect. And that makes it very simple to say the most important decision you will ever make is a religious one, it is a spiritual one. The most important decision you'll ever make is that decision which determines your eternal destiny. Or to put it in the language of Jesus here, the most important decision you will ever make is the one that determines whether you survive judgment. It is a decision about heaven or hell, essentially.

And occasionally I will admit, though it's rare, there are people who choose hell. They choose hell. Like that bizarre letter I received a few weeks ago, I mentioned to you, in which a man said he couldn't wait to get to hell. He was anxious to go there because everybody he cared about was there and he wouldn't have to run into people like me ever again...and other Christians. He was eager for hell, he said. And he, as you might remember, was a man who added in the letter he wrote to me that I had baptized him here in 1978. So he had a taste of the lives of those who are going to heaven and he preferred hell. That's pretty stark and that's pretty uncommon.

Religion thrives in the world because people want to go to heaven by whatever definition, whether it's the nothingness nirvana of the Buddhist who contemplates himself into oblivion, or whether it's the happy hunting ground, or whether it's across the silver river of the mystic Greek pantheon or whatever it might be, or whether it's going in to the calm, cool light at the end of the tunnel to the New Agers, whatever it is, religion thrives on the idea of heaven. It thrives on the idea that there's something for you in the next life that's better, painless hopefully, fulfilling, without all of the difficulties and trials and tribulations, disappointments and sufferings of this life. All religions promise some kind of heaven. That's what they sell, they sell heaven. That's what it's about. They sell some kind of bliss, some kind of happiness, some kind of fulfillment, some kind of rewarding life on another plain. It may take you a while to get there.

When I was meeting with the leaders of the Mormon church some time ago, they...they wanted...they were very kind to me and they wanted me to come, as I told you, to speak at Brigham Young and all of this and they had been using some of my books up there as text books, which is amazing to believe. But I said to them, I said, "Well look," I said, "how am I going to get to heaven? You need to tell me how am I going to get to heaven. You keep saying you worship the same God and you have respect for Christ." They were trying to find all the areas of agreement. So I said, "How do I get to heaven?"

And they responded in an act of kindness, I think, on their part, they said, "Oh, you're already going to be in a lot higher heaven than most Mormons would think."

I said, "Oh really," because Mormonism has all kinds of heavens. And they said, "You're already going to be in a lot higher heaven than most Mormons would think."

And I said, "Well, how do I get to the highest one?" And they went on to explain to me a way in which I could surely go directly to hell...not heaven. Oh they thought it went to heaven, but it doesn't go there. They have a very sophisticated process of getting you to the levels of heaven, that's what that religion is all about.

All religions promise heaven. That's what the attraction is. And today there are many within the framework, the broad framework of evangelical Christianity who think that just about anybody's

sincerity in religion will guarantee them heaven. It's a little evangelical inclusivism. I had a man say to me the other day, "You know, we like working with other Christian groups like the Catholics and the Mormons."

There's a new inclusivism that proclaims that anybody who is sincerely religious will be in heaven. I was at a mission conference not long ago, just in the last couple of months. All about reaching the whole world with the gospel and there were a number of people there who worked in that organization. And I was asked, I can't remember if it was three, four or five times, I think it was four times, the same question...are the people who never hear the gospel really lost? This is a strange question to be asking when you're a part of a missionary organization. This is a very strange question. You would think that somewhere along the line you would have answered that, right? But what you realize is, they're got a methodology without a theology. They're skilled at the methodology but have no idea what the theology is. And when I said, "If a person doesn't know the Lord Jesus Christ, they're going to hell," that was really more than they could handle.

There is this new inclusivism that says anybody in any religion who is sincere is going to go to heaven. And it's been espoused by people with Ph.D.s from theological institutions who have religious titles and they're broadening everything. They, frankly, all these Ph.D.s and religious leaders and theologians could learn something very important from uneducated American slaves who knew the truth and invented a little song that said, "Everybody talking about heaven ain't going there." And that was true and it still is and they had a far better theology than the erudite today who want to include everybody. Peter Creef(?) in his book Ecumenical Jihadsays Buddhists, Confucionists, Protestants, Catholics and Muslims will all be in heaven. Quote: "Perhaps in heaven the most ardent worshipers of Christ will be pious Muslims," end quote. In his book he gave the Koran divine status as the Word of God. And he says, "Allah is just another name for Jehovah."

Is that how it is? Is anybody in any religion who is sincere, particularly a monotheistic religion, are we all going the same way? If that's true, then surely Jewish people, devout Jewish people, orthodox Jewish people are for sure going to heaven because at least they've got half of it right. Muslims don't have any of it right because they don't believe either the Old or the New Testament to be the singular revelation of God. So we could conclude that if there is an inclusivism in the gospel, if the lost aren't really lost, if the people who never heard the gospel aren't lost, if the people who never saw not even a New Testament but never saw an Old Testament aren't lost, if Muslims are going to heaven, if Buddhists are going to heaven, if whatever other forms of religion are on their way to heaven, if that's the way it's going to be then surely for absolute truth Jewish people are going to heaven because you can't get closer to Christianity than that. If being far will get you there, certainly being close will get you there, right?

How close is Judaism? We believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we have that in common. It's true. We believe in God's holy nature as holy, holy, holy. We believe in His

omniscience, His omnipresence, His immutability, the very attributes of God, the incommunicable attributes of God. We believe God is Creator, sustainer, sovereign judge. I can get with the rabbi and we can sit and we can agree on all of that. We believe that the God of the Old Testament is the creator, the sustainer. He is the care-giver, if you will, the comforter of His people. He is the consummator of history, etc., etc., etc. We believe that. We believe the God of the Old Testament. We believe in sin. We believe in righteousness. We believe in obedience to God's law. We believe there is only one God and that idolatry is a blasphemous violation of the first and great commandment, to worship only that one God. We agree on that. We agree that God is to be worshiped and God alone is to be worshiped. And anybody wants to worship God has to lift up holy hands and a pure heart. We believe that. We believe in virtues like love and humility and honesty and kindness and forgiveness.

And it's also interesting, you get with a group of Jewish people and you have all the same heroes because the heroes of the faith are listed in Hebrews chapter 11. They're all Old Testament heroes. We have all the same heroes. So when they quote Jeremiah, or they quote Isaiah as a couple of the rabbis who were speaking did, or when they talk about David, or they talk about Moses, or Abraham, those are my heroes, too.

And then we also have the same father of faith in the sense that Abraham is the father of Israel and Abraham is the father of faith to those who believe, Paul says in Galatians. So...so it goes. There are a lot that does unite us but what separates us is infinite...it's infinite. And the illustration of this is right here in our text.

Jesus is preaching to Jewish people. Get it now, preaching to fastidious, orthodox, devout, pious, zealous, passionate Jewish people who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who believe in the law of the prophets and the Hagiographa, the holy writings which are the three sections of the Old Testament. They believe in the Word of God as revealed in the Old Testament. They believe in the promises of God. They believe in the one true God, the Lord is one, the Lord is one, right? The Shema, that's what they believe, they're monotheistic.

They're serious about the law of God. They're serious about the details of the law of God. They desire to keep the law of God. They desire to worship God, to honor God. They have the temple where they go and they worship God and they follow the prescriptions of the ceremonies and the sacrifices and all of the festivals and feasts and new moons and Sabbaths and all of that. They're...they're in to that completely. We would say they are the orthodox of the orthodox. That's how...that's the kind of Judaism that existed in the time of Jesus. There were some...some offshoots, some liberals among those Jews who were not what we would say classic, fundamentalists or orthodox. That would be the Sadducees, they were the religious liberals. There were some who were politically oriented called the Zealots who were more into the political issues. There were the Essenes who were monastic, who were the antiestablishment, antisocial ones who lived out in the

caves down by the Dead Sea. But for the most part, the vast, dominant viewpoint of Judaism was that which was articulated by the scribes and the Pharisees. And it was a very, very clear commitment to Old Testament Scripture. So you could see that this was as close as you're going to get to the truth.

You can take it a step further. They were really fascinated about Jesus, fascinated by Jesus. In fact, the group to whom He speaks here are called "disciples" in verse 20, if you go back to the beginning of Luke's recording of the sermon. They're called "disciples." That's learners, students. They have devoted themselves to becoming Jesus' students. This is how it was in ancient times. You didn't necessarily go sit in a classroom. If you wanted to be taught, you picked your teacher and you followed your teacher around and teachers moved in a kind of life-mentor environment with the followers, their students, their learners, mathetes.

And so these people, thousands of them, had identified with Jesus and, of course, He was the most popular teacher ever because no one ever was able to do what He did in terms of physical miracles, or spiritual miracles, casting out demons. No one ever taught the way He taught. No one had the profound words that He had. No one ever spoke the way He spoke. And so He drew the biggest crowd. And so these are following Jesus, they're flowing with Him day after day, and He comes to this point, they're already in the Jewish system, they're already at a level of devotion that draws them to Jesus as a spokesman for God. So they're interested in what God has to say. He may be...they may be convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, some of them are, some of them aren't, some of them are in transition. They're all over the map. They're a mixed multitude of people who to one degree or another are interested in Jesus. Some are true disciples, and some are not and then everything in the middle, on the way toward Christ, or maybe on the way away, becoming disillusioned by what He said, as often happened.

But that is the group to whom He speaks...very religious people. They are as close to the truth as they can possibly get because they bought the entire Old Testament, they're worshiping the God of the Old Testament and they're looking for the fulfillment of the promises of the God of the Old Testament in the coming of Messiah and the salvation that's going to come with Him. So it's as close as you can get. And they follow Jesus.

And Jesus never says to them, "You guys are okay, you're close enough. Close is good." He never said that. This is not horseshoes. Close is not enough.

How close were they? Verse 36, "Why do you call Me Lord, Lord." This is good. Isn't it appropriate to call Jesus Lord? It is. It is appropriate to call Jesus Lord. "Why do you call Me Lord, Lord?" Well you could say...because ...because we respect You so much...You have divine power...You speak divine truth...You are definitely from God so we call you Lord, Lord.

What does <u>kurios</u>mean? Well it means teacher, master. It is also used in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, to translate the word Jehovah. The sum of which is calling Him "Lord, Lord" repeatedly means not just teacher but the teacher of teachers, the master of all masters, the master teacher. And not only that but one who speaks for Jehovah.

This is getting close. If you're in Judaism, not in Buddhism or Hinduism or Islam or whatever else, you're in Judaism, that's close. Not only that, you are following and learning from the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ and you are affirming that He is the teacher of teachers who speaks for God. This is good...this is very good.

But Jesus says, "With all of that, it's not enough." Admiring Jesus frightens me, makes me very nervous when people admire the fact that I proclaim Christ. I would rather that they resented it, hadn't made me nervous. To say, "Well, we're just really happy to have you who love Christ, you know, come along with us." That makes me very nervous because if you can convince yourself that Jesus is just some teacher to be admired, that's a serious miscalculation. Jesus won't have it. Jesus says, "The problem is you call me Lord but you don't do what I say." That's the problem. I'm not looking for your curiosity, I'm not looking for your fascination. I'm not looking for your admiration. I'm telling you what it is to be a true follower.

And they started out, you remember, in verses 20 to 26 where He says, "True followers are repenters, they have looked into their lives deeply and they have assessed their true spiritual bankruptcy, they are poor, poverty-stricken spiritually. They are hungry, they are weeping and they are alienated."

And then He turned the corner and He said, "Also, those true disciples of Mine not only hate their own sin but they love their enemies." And that was the second section from verse 27 to 38 in which we looked at the unique evidence of a transformed life by virtue of loving enemies. So Jesus said, "My true disciples hate sin in themselves and they love even those who persecute them." There is a hatred in a true disciple that is inexplicable humanly because man by his own fallen nature overestimates his own goodness, right? It's only the work of God in the heart, the work of conviction that can bring a person to a right assessment of his spiritual bankruptcy. So true disciples have had that work of God wrought in their hearts. They are the broken and contrite whom the Lord does not despise but receives.

And secondly, it is not normal to love your enemies. It is not normal to be kind to those who hate you and persecute you and harm you. It is not natural to do that. And that's another evidence of the work of God. On the negative side, God does the work of helping you to see how bad you are. And then on the positive side, He does the work of giving you such goodness that you literally exude forgiveness toward those who hurt you. That's the work of God in the heart of a true disciple.

Then we saw in the last look, last week, verses 39 to 45 that a true disciple has had the work of God in his heart so that he hates sin, the work of God in his heart so that he loves his enemies, and the work of God in his heart so that he follows Christ alone. He doesn't follow blind guides. He doesn't follow earthly teachers. He doesn't follow hypocrites who can't get something out of his eye because they have something bigger in their own eye. He doesn't follow fruitless trees, or trees whose fruit is wicked. Jesus is saying that's what all the other false religionists are, they're blind leaders of the blind, they're earthy and they can't take you any further than they themselves can go so their limitations become your limitations. They can't help you with that which is in your eye, that which is destructive in your eye because they've got something so massive in their own eye. And all they ever produce is bad fruit, wickedness and iniquity. And so everything isolates to Christ.

If you're going to go into the Kingdom of God, if you're going to go into the Kingdom of heaven, if you're going to have salvation, if you're going to go to heaven, then God must be doing that work of repentance, that work of producing an unnatural love and isolating you to following the true teacher who is Jesus Christ. And then He comes to the conclusion of the sermon and He says, "You keep calling Me 'Lord, Lord' but the problem is, you don't do what I say." Patronizing Me is not what I'm after. "Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord' and not do what I tell you?" It's good to call Me Lord, if you don't call Him Lord you can't be saved, Romans 8:9 and 10, "If yo confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you'll be saved." That's good. First Corinthians 12:3, "No man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit works a work in your heart, brings you to the place where you call Jesus as Lord and you confess Him as Lord and you are saved. That's very good. But don't do that, confess Him as Lord with your mouth, and not obey Him. That's not acceptable.

Now listen to what I'm saying here. How close do you have to be to get saved? Well there are people today who say, "Ah, if you're sincere in any religion, you're going to be in heaven...If you're a lost pagan somewhere in the remote part of the world and you never heard anything about the Bible or Jesus and you're a good person trying to live up to whatever, you're going to be in heaven...And if you're a part of an organized monotheistic religion like Islam or whatever, you're certainly well-intentioned, you're going to be in heaven...And if you're a Roman Catholic even though you're a little confused about who's the real redeemer, Mary or Jesus, you're going to be in heaven...And certainly you can't get closer than being a Jew, an orthodox Jew who buys into the whole Old Testament and is careful about following that and if you get that close you certainly have to be in heaven...And, O my, if you think Jesus is a good teacher, why of course you're going to be in heaven because those people over there who never heard of Him are going to be in heaven.."

But this whole kind of thinking Jesus devastates because right here He says, in effect, "You can believe the whole Old Testament, you can call Me Lord and go to hell." In Matthew's account of this, Matthew 7:21, Matthew records that Jesus said, "Many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and I will say to

them, 'Depart from Me, I never knew you, you workers of iniquity.'"

Listen to this, folks. Not only are people who don't know Christ not saved, people who confess Christ aren't saved in many cases. Close doesn't count. And Jesus is saying, "Look, if it's just a matter of calling Me Lord, Lord, and not doing what I say, that doesn't matter. That's not enough." In fact, it's a kind of profanity. It's not the profanity of the street, it's the profanity of the sanctuary. You're profaning the name of the Lord. You're using His name in vain. Nothing is more blasphemous than to say, "Lord, Lord," with your mouth and not do what He says. That's a Judas kiss, isn't it? It's a Judas kiss.

And that's what Jesus is saying here. I'm telling you, people, He's saying...You have to leave Judaism and come to Me. In John 1:12, "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name," that is His name meaning all that He is, and all that He's done. If you want to be a child of God, you've got to believe in Jesus Christ. You've got to receive Jesus Christ. We know that, that's the gospel.

In John chapter 6 and verse 40, and these are very important verses in today's environment, anytime, but particularly today, Jesus says in John 6:40, "This is the will of My Father that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life." You have to see the Son, know who He is, believe in Him to have eternal life...no Christ, no salvation.

In Acts chapter 4 verse 12 he talks about Jesus Christ whom God raised from the dead and there is salvation in no one else, there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. We covered some of this in a two-part series I did some months ago called "No Gospel, No Salvation." But there isn't any other way to be saved. And people will always...this is the follow-up question, "Well, well, how they going to hear the gospel?" And my answer is a very simple one. If God wants them to be saved, He'll get the gospel to them, right? Is that a difficult problem for Him?

Romans 10 says it as explicitly, and I've referred to it, as it could be said. Romans 10, "Confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead and you'll be saved." That's it, believe in the Christ who was Lord who rose from the dead for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness. With the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation. It can't be more clear than that.

First Corinthians 16:22 says, "If anybody doesn't believe in the Lord Jesus, let him be cursed...anathema." In 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 it says that God is going to come in fiery judgment against those who obey not the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a command. People are commanded, sinners are commanded, all of us are commanded to believe, to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Here's the Lord speaking to the most religious people possible, the people in the right religion, Judaism. This is as close as you can get. People consumed by it, absorbed by their religion. And even fascinated by Jesus, admiring Jesus, saying...really saying as magnanimous things as they could possibly say about Jesus...Teacher, Teacher, Master, Teacher, Spokesman for God. I mean that is as much as they...that is as polite and kind and as admiring as they could possibly get.

But He says it doesn't mean anything if you don't do what I say. And what I say is, you have to recognize your sin, see that you're poor, prisoners, blind and oppressed, that you are the poor, that you are the hungry, the starving really spiritually, that you are the sad over whose lives there should be endless mourning because of your alienation from God. I'm tell you, you've got to look at yourself and see yourself as a sinner, then you've got to look at Me and see Me as your Lord and cry out to God for mercy. Even before the cross they needed to affirm their sin, cry out for the grace and mercy of God on their sinful lives and not depend on their self-righteousness, which is, of course, what the system did as it does today even now.

Some of these people later at the last day, Jesus says, in the day of judgment are going to say, "Lord, we prophesied in Your name, we cast out demons in Your name, we did many miracles in Your name," Matthew 7 talks about that in verse 22, we did it in Your name, three times, in Your name...in Your name...in Your name. We not only called You Lord Teacher, we became devoted to You, we thought we were ministering in Your name. And Jesus says, "Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity, I never knew you."

How close is close enough? Close doesn't count at all. Judaism doesn't count. Judaism that acknowledged Jesus as a spokesman for God didn't count. Judaism that went so far as to actually try to function in Jesus' name and there were some people among the Jews who were trying to cast out demons in Jesus' name. Remember, the disciples reported that to Him. Close doesn't count. You have to do what He said, what He said, of course, was to recognize your sin, cry out to God for grace and mercy and forgiveness.

Jesus preached and He came preaching repentance, right? In other words, the system said you're righteous, you're good enough if you do these rules, God will accept you. Jesus' message was, "You're not good enough, you're damned, you're doomed, you're hopeless, you're sinful, recognize that, cry out to God for mercy, a mercy which God will grant you for My sake, confess Me as your Lord." That's what He was commanding them to do.

It was really a necessary thing to, get this one, literally abandoned Judaism, abandon it. That's what He was asking. It doesn't do you any good to admire Me, it doesn't do you any good to call Me Lord. It doesn't do you any good to say you're ministering in My name if you don't do what I said. It's the pattern of obedience that starts with believing, obeying the gospel. The gospel is a command to

believe and be saved and then a continual pattern of obedience. John 8:31, "Whoever continues in My Word is My real disciple," mathetesalethos, real one. If you continue to obey what I say, you're My real disciple. And that's been reiterated all throughout the New Testament. The new child of God is the one who obeys Him, read that in John 15. Read it in 1 John, "If you say you abide in Christ you ought to walk the way He walked." Don't tell Me you're a believer, but you don't obey the Word of God. If you're a believer, the Word of God, the Spirit of God abides in you, you don't continue in a pattern of sin that's unbroken.

See, He was saying you call Me Lord but you don't do the will of My Father. And what is the will of My Father? "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, listen to Him." Or in the words of John the Baptist, the prophet of God, "This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." You have to see Me as your sin-bearing Savior, as your Lord and God.

So, people have God on their lips but not on their hearts. That is a kind of profanity. James put it this way, "Be not hearers of the Word only, deceiving your own selves." On the other hand, he said, "Be ye doers of the Word." It's always that way. Look at verse 47 and as Jesus expands, "Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts upon them." You come to Christ, you hear the gospel and you act. What does that mean? You obey, you do what the gospel commands, you believe, you receive, you repent, you confess. All the commands of the gospel, repent of sin, confess your sin, believe in the Lord Jesus, receive the Lord Jesus. That's what's required. That alone will save...that alone will save. And nobody short of that is going to heaven, I don't care what religion they're in even if it's Judaism, even if it's Christianity, even if it's somebody right here at this church.

And then He gives an illustration that is unforgettable. "The one who comes to Me hears My words and acts upon them," that's obedience, "I'll show you whom he's like. He's like a man building a house who dug deep," that's kind of the idea of repentance, getting really down to the realities of my own life and down also deep into the truth of God, "and laid a foundation upon the rock." Rock is an Old Testament term for God, isn't it? And foundation is a New Testament term for Christ used a number of times, most notably in 1 Corinthians 3:11.

So you go all the way down, you dig down into spiritual realities, you dig down deep and you lay the foundation on a rock bed. "And when a flood rose," as they did frequently and still do occasionally in Israel, very much like California. You have a very dry climate, almost identical to our climate here and when you have torrential rains, dry river beds begin to swell and floods just begin to wash away houses, and that's exactly what you have. In the picture they would be very familiar with this kind of picture, a guy builds his house, puts a foundation down, the flood rises as the rains come, the water goes over the banks of the dry bed, the torrents burst against the house, the language is very graphic and vivid, smashes the house and couldn't shake it because it had been well built. And well built simply is a summary of all that had been done...dug deep, laid a foundation on a rock. It's all about foundation.

The house is your religious life. The house is your church life. The house is your Judaism. The house is your religious activity, ceremony, etc. The storm is divine judgment. The storm is going to come from God. It's the fury of God. But it can't shake this house because it's on an immovable foundation. The foundation in the Old Testament is the rock who is God. The foundation in the New Testament is Christ. But we could extend that. In Matthew 7 Jesus says, "Whoever hears My Word and does it, whoever hears My Word and does it..." It refers to these words of Mine, and here you have the same thing back in verse 47, "Hears My words." So what you have here is the message of Christ which is about God as the rock, about Christ as the foundation, and the gospel. So whoever builds his life on the gospel, on the great cornerstone of the gospel from Matthew 16, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." That's the rock bed, cornerstone foundation. When you go down and you build your life on God in Christ and the gospel, storms of judgment can never move your house. That's somebody who just doesn't admire Jesus, but who embraces Him as Lord and Savior.

On the other hand, verse 49 says, you have an alternative. "The one who has heard, not acted, he's like the man who built his house on the ground without any foundation." In Matthew's account...sand. "The torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed and the ruin of that house was great."

These are religious houses, by the way, built apparently the same way, at least superficially, built in the same area because the same storm affected both. So one is the truth and one is Judaism. They're in proximity. Jesus is coming, He's bringing the truth. New Covenant truth, it's in proximity to Judaism. He's not talking about some religion on the other end of the planet, He's talking about Judaism, the religion of the time and the people. And He is picturing it as a house without a foundation.

And when the storm of judgment comes, these two side by side, they might look on the outside from somebody who is just a bystander like everything is fine, wonderful, religious edifice has been built, but when the judgment comes, the one without the foundation gets swept away. We can't always tell that. We look at somebody's life even in the church and we don't know whether Christ is really there or not. We don't know whether the foundation is there or not. We don't know whether they dug deep with repentance, whether they went down to an understanding of their true condition before God, cried out for mercy, embraced the Savior. We don't know whether that's happened or not, or whether they're just going through the motions.

I received a letter two weeks ago from a man who said after 22 years being involved in Grace Church in ministry, I just was saved. Could have fooled me, did fool me. I'm easy to fool. I can't see the foundation anymore than you can see the foundation on my house. But where there is a foundation, it's going to stand the judgment.

Again, the key thing here is not to admire Christ, it's to obey Christ. And if you get all the way up, you're an orthodox Jew, you get all the way up, you even admire Jesus, you might think He's a prophet, you might think He speaks for God, you might think He's a great teacher. You get that close you might even decide to identify with Him somehow, maybe become a liberal professor in some liberal seminary and you talk about Jesus all the time. Maybe you become a liberal pastor in a liberal church. Maybe you become a part of a cult that talks about Jesus. Maybe you become a part of an evangelical movement that talks about Jesus and superficially identifies with Him. But the foundation isn't there. You can get that close to even identifying with Jesus to even ministering in His name and your whole life is going to be a great ruin. What He's talking about there is, of course, eternal punishment...eternal punishment

Just in kind of wrapping it up. It's so important to dig deep. It's so important to have an honest, deep understanding of your condition and a deep understanding of the gospel. Christianity has become so superficial, so surface, no foundation, no deep plowing, no spade work, no brokenness of heart, no mourning, no really coming to grips with waywardness, lack of depth. The shallowness produces a superficial convert. But this is a person who goes for the truth of the gospel, who embraces the teaching of Christ and goes deep. Not in a hurry, no quickie conversion, no light off the top confession, real counting the cost, digging deep with an attitude of penitence, this is the person who knows the foundation is everything. It doesn't really matter what the house looks like, the decor isn't going to determine its ability to survive.

And so you have a choice. The most important choice you'll every make and the choice is between damning religion, and Christ. Okay? That's it. And anything but Christ is damning religion. It catapults people into hell, no matter what it promises or what it claims about heaven. And truly, everybody talking about heaven ain't going there...unless by true obedience to the gospel you have repented, confessed, believed, received Christ as the foundation, you will not survive divine judgment. Jesus talked more about hell than He did about heaven in order to warn men of its reality. And that's exactly what He means when He says, "The ruin of that house was great." May God by His grace help you to make the right choice. It's one thing to choose to go to hell, it's something else to choose to go to heaven but end up in hell because you chose a deception. There is no salvation in any other than Christ.

Our Father, we remember the old hymn paraphrasing a little bit, "My house is built on nothing less that Jesus' blood and righteousness, On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand." We thank You for Your grace to us. We thank You that You have opened our hearts to Christ, that we came to Him, that we heard and we acted. We thank You, O God, that You energized our faith, that You awakened our dead souls and that we saw Christ in all His glory and even through our frail and ignorant perceptions we saw the Savior and we knew our need and we embraced Him. Father, may we be reminded consistently that there is no salvation in any other place. It's so amazing, Lord, to say that. Even as I was saying it on the television the other night that if you don't

believe in Jesus Christ there is no other way of salvation and people are so shocked by that, but that's what You've said. You can come to Judaism in its most devout form, you can acknowledge Jesus as the master teacher who speaks for God. You can do things in His name and go to hell. And if that can happen that close, it certainly the norm as the distance increases away from Christ. Help us to know that that is why You told us to go to all the world and preach the gospel to every creature and to teach them to observe all things, Jesus said, whatsoever I have commanded you. You want obedience. We want to render that obedience in the strength of Your Spirit. My You, O God, today awaken hearts, even as our choir introduced the service reminding us of the need for an awakening, may there be a Holy Spirit awakening in our hearts to our true condition and to the reality that Jesus Christ alone is Savior. And may we come and hear and act in obeying the gospel. To that end we pray for Your glory. Amen.

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