

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

### **Empty Hearts, Empty Words**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-88

I grew up in a wonderful Christian family. Everybody around me who claimed to be a Christian really was. And I don't think it ever entered my mind that the world was full of people who claimed to be Christians but weren't.

That first struck me when I was in high school and had a very close friend. This friend and I were football players, we played together in the same backfield and knocked heads and went through the competition together all the years of my high school experience. In fact, we played baseball together, I played shortstop and he played first base. Sometimes in the summer I worked for his dad who was a car dealer down in Santa Monica. I had the wonderful opportunity, along with him, to repossess cars...every high school kid's dream.

We went away to college. I went away to study for the ministry and he went away to a university and I met him two years into his university experience. He had been the president of his youth group all through high school and we had witnessed together down in Los Angeles. I remember passing out tracks and witnessing in Pershing Square. And after two years in college, the first time we had seen each other since our days in high school, he said to me, "I have something to tell you, John." And I said, "What is it?" He said, "I'm an atheist." I didn't understand how a person could claim to be a Christian and then become an atheist.

I went away to college and I had almost an identical experience. I played in the backfield with another young man whose father was a pastor and a very close friend of my father. In fact, they were kind of buddies in their pastoral years growing up. And myself and Don were good friends, we were co-captains of the football team. We went through all the battles together that you do in collegiate football and shared the same backfield and went on the same road trips, and spent a lot of time together because he was a very, very bright young guy and he was very interested in theology. And he was teaching the college Bible class in his church and I was teaching the college Bible class in my church and we were always comparing notes. And we graduated together. He was Student Body President, and I was Student Body Vice President. We were good buddies. And he went away to college, graduated, went on and got a Ph.D. and became a drug pusher and an entrepreneur of rock concerts. And in one of his sociology classes where he taught at Long Beach State University, he took two students, put them in the front of his class, stripped them naked and put on some kind of a sex review and was defrocked of his teaching and was put in jail for drugs and served I think

something like a seven-year sentence, denied the faith.

I had another friend in college who played on the baseball team with me and we went away to school. In fact, we both went to seminary after college. I came out a preacher. He came out a bartender.

I went to seminary, had a very good friend. We sang in a quartet in our seminary days together. We even ministered together. And we were involved in all kinds of activities while I was a student at seminary. And after seminary I got married and went on into the ministry. He got married and set up a Buddhist altar in his house.

Those are very personal experiences. If you are wondering why it is that I'm so interested in this question of who is really a Christian, it's very personal to me. It's not just a question of how can Christians, quote/unquote, shoot Catholics in Northern Ireland? Or how can Christians quote/unquote shoot Muslims in Bosnia? Are they really Christians? And what about all those people who go to those so-called churches that are nothing more than rock piles where the truth is not preached? But if you ask them, they'll say they're Christians.

Who is a Christian? Certainly not everybody who says they are. I mean, even the old Negro spiritual said that, "Everybody talking about heaven ain't going there." The issue of true salvation is of monumental significance not only to us but certainly to our Lord. Many, many places in the Scripture are devoted to this issue and Jesus Himself was preeminently concerned about it, about the difference about being religious and knowing God, the difference between being religious and being saved from sin, the difference from being religious and being on your way to heaven. And this is the theme of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. And as that sermon comes to its culmination in chapter 7 and verse 21, hear the words of our Lord. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven. But he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and in Your name cast out demons? And in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them may be compared to a wise man who built his house upon the rock and the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and burst against that house, and yet it did not fall for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act upon them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand and the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and burst against that house and it fell and great was its fall."

What an ending to a sermon. The issue here is who has a religious house that is going to survive the final judgment? Who is it that really will survive when God moves?

Now, in the two paragraphs that I read you, the first is in verses 21 to 23, the second in verses 24 to 27, in those two paragraphs you have the same issue being dealt with. But first He describes the issue of a mere verbal profession, and then the second, a mere intellectual knowledge. And what He is saying in the first paragraph is that just saying you're in the Kingdom doesn't make it so. And in the second what He is saying is simply understanding spiritual truth doesn't make you a believer. In fact, verbal profession that is nothing more than empty words. Intellectual knowledge that is nothing more than an empty heart is nothing more than a camouflage for disobedience. These two paragraphs really are the heart of the whole issue of who is a Christian. The only difference, as I said, between the first and the second is that one deals with verbal profession and the other deals with head knowledge....empty words and empty hearts.

And you remember, as Jesus is preaching the Sermon on the Mount which began in chapter 5 and went all the way through 5, 6 and 7, He is not speaking to irreligious people. He's not speaking to outright pagans or idol worshipers. He's speaking to men and women who are obsessed with religion and, in fact, if I need to remind you, they are obsessed with the right religion, Judaism. They are obsessed with the true God as revealed in the Old Testament, Jehovah God. They are religious. But for many of them it is nothing more than an empty profession. They are religious and they are damned.

To put it in Paul's words, they had a form of godliness without the reality. And we have that today. People just like these Jews of Jesus' day who were attached to the right religion but utterly devoid of a relationship with God. And we have multitudes of people like that. Some of them manage to hang around their whole life, and some of them like my friends eventually reveal the truth and bail out. Now frankly, I'm concerned, as Jesus was, about any of you who might be deceived about your true spiritual condition, any of you who might think you are in the Kingdom when you are not and who might show up in that crowd on that day of judgment and say, "Lord, Lord," and hear, "Depart from Me, I never knew you." I suppose the most shocking word in the passage I just read you is in verse 22, it's the first word, "Many," this is not a rare situation, this is a common one. Back in verse 13 it says that the way is broad that leads to destruction. Remember now, that is a religious way and many are those who enter by it. We're talking about most people who are involved in religion being unconverted, unsaved, deceived.

What lulls people into such a deception? How could people believe that all was well when it wasn't? I suppose there are a number of answers, I could suggest a few briefly. One would be a false understanding of assurance. Somebody told them once because they prayed a prayer or put their hand in the air or walked an aisle that they're really saved and somebody certified that salvation based upon that prayer or that act and told them, "Don't ever need to doubt that. You prayed the prayer, you...you've come forward, you've signed the card, you've done it." And so people might think that as long as they say certain things, as long as they go through certain formalities or as long as they go through certain religious ceremonies like Baptism, or some other kind of religious ceremony

that all is well, when it's not. Salvation is not based on what you say, it's based on what you do. You could say all the right things, pray all the right prayers and be damned.

And I suppose a second thing that contributes to this deception would be a failure to self-examination. Just failing to really look at your own life and take an inventory. That's why 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith. Don't be deceived." You see, some people are so grace oriented, so into the idea that if you once prayed the prayer God is so literally overwhelmingly gracious that on the basis of that one act you can be sure that grace will cover everything. And an overestimation of the significance of God's grace, a misunderstanding of the terms of God's grace, a failure of self-examination can leave you in a self-deceived position.

I suppose a third reason that people are deceived is because of a fixation on religious activities. They feel they've joined the church, they attend the services, they go to a Sunday-school class, occasionally they attend a Bible study, sometimes they do something noble like make a sacrificial gift to someone who is in need, or visit someone in the hospital or maybe even offer a prayer occasionally. And because they think that those religious activities please God, they assume they must be evidences of salvation.

And then there are people, I think, who are deceived because they see salvation as kind of a fair exchange policy. In other words, we sort of balance off our sin with some good deeds and you hear this all the time with people who are associated with Christianity, with the church or religion, they say, "Well I do my best to live a good life, I believe in God and I...I go to church. I know I do a lot of bad things but I kind of think the good things will overbalance the bad ones. And when the scales are finally tipped, it will tip in the favor of goodness, and I'm sure I'll get in."

Those are some of the reasons why people are self-deceived. But the issue is, there are many people in Christendom in all shapes and sizes, in all forms, and all communions of Christendom who are utterly deceived. They have not gone through the narrow gate, they have not genuinely repented. They have not confessed the lordship of Christ. They have not humbled themselves. They have not become broken over their sin. They have not had a contrite heart. They have not submitted to Christ. They are really on the broad way which says heaven and doesn't get there. You see, what our Lord wants is the heart. He wants the inner man. He doesn't want merely our profession, He doesn't want our external religious activities, our works. He wants us.

Now the deceived can come in several categories. There are the superficial deceived, they call themselves Christians. They grew up in a Christian family. Maybe they were baptized as an infant. Maybe they quote/unquote accepted Christ, believed in God. They are ignorant and uncommitted but because they're in a Christian milieu, traditionally they...they are the superficial who are deceived.

But they go to church, by the way, on Christmas and Easter. And then there are the involved. They're all throughout the church and they're the tares. They're sowed into the very life of the church. They know the gospel. They know the theology. They just don't know God. And then there are the hypocrites and they're not believers and they know it but they stay in the church for whatever reason...business, lots of customers in the church, marriage, keeps the marriage together for the sake of the kids, keeps peace at home, they're here too. You have the superficial people who come in and out of the door occasionally and think because they are in a Christian environment in their tradition and because they give a little to the church occasionally of their time and effort that they must be Christians. And then you have the deeply involved tares who are so deeply deceived, even though they're involved they don't know they're not saved because they haven't really examined themselves. And then you have the hypocrites who hang around for what ever reason, who put on a fair display for the sake of personal pride and selfish gain.

And I suppose it's fair to ask the question...how do you recognize those people? How do you know? And you might ask me that. I mean, you've been at this a long time, you say, "Pastor, you study the Scripture, you kind of study people, and you've been around long enough, what do you look for in people that tells that, that kind of triggers the thought that they might be deceived? That they might not really be Christians."

Well, I'll give you a few ideas. And by the way, I don't want to give you the results of a survey, I've never done a survey. But I believe that the majority of people who claim to be Christians are not. And what do I look for that's kind of tell-tale signs? Well several things. Number one, those who seek feelings, blessings, experiences, healings, angels. You see they're more interested in the byproducts of the faith than they are the faith. They're more interested in the gifts than they are the giver. They're more interested in the blessing than they are the blesser. And then another dead giveaway are people who are more committed to their denomination or their church than they are to the Word of God and to have a very superficial knowledge of, or interest in Scripture but a very high level of devotion to the system. And then I look at people also to whom theology is nothing more than an academic interest. You find these kinds of people in seminaries everywhere, teaching in colleges in the area of theology. And then I look for people also who always want to deal with one over-emphasized point of theology because it seems to me that those people are just seeking a platform on which they can gain some kind of hearing for their own ego's sake. And then I look for people who are consistently over-indulgent in the name of grace, who are always wanting to talk about how gracious God is as an excuse for their licentiousness.

Well, let's look at what our Lord says to these kinds of people and let's see if you pass the test. First of all, the folly of empty words, verse 21. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name? And in Your name cast out demons? And in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart

from Me you who practice lawlessness."

You see, this is the sayers versus the doers. The people whom Jesus condemns are branded as false, listen, because their life and their lip are not in harmony. They say one thing and they do something else. Their claims are deceitful. They might even say the right things but they don't live them so this is nothing but empty words, meaningless words. These people are banking on the affirmation of some creed. They're banking on what they say to be true about Jesus. But their final destiny will not be based on what they say now, or what they say then, but what they do, supporting what they say. It's not just profession, it's profession and obedience.

Now what they say is really good here. Look what they say. "Lord, Lord," now there's zeal in that, isn't there? They didn't just say, "Lord," they said, "Lord, Lord." There's passion in that. The first Lord we could say is respectful, reverent, polite. The second lord is zealous, passionate, fervent. And they are acknowledging the true God and the true Lord Jesus Christ, there's orthodoxy here. You might even call them fundamentalists. And then they say in verse 22, "In Your name...in Your name...in Your name," three times. We preached, we worked in Your name. What does that mean? "For Your sake." And the Your, or Thy in the Old English is emphatic in the Greek. It was for Your sake we did this, for Your sake we did this, for Your sake we did it. All the time our motive was to honor You and serve You and glorify You. There's a lot of respect in this confession. "ord, *kurios*, deity, Lord, *kurios*, Master, God, for You, for You, for You we have lived and served." That sounds good. There's no heresy in that, is there? There's no heterodoxy in that. We come in the name of Jesus Christ. We come claiming Jesus as Lord with courtesy, with orthodoxy, with fervency and private devotion and public proclamation. It sounds so good. But Jesus said, "Not everyone who says that will enter the Kingdom of heaven."

What does that tell you? That there are people all over everywhere making orthodox profession who are not a part of God's Kingdom. How clear is that? They make their confession in 21 and 22, and the Lord responds with His confession in verse 23. "And then I will *homologeō*, I will make My confession to you, 'I never knew you.'" You may claim Me, but I don't claim you. You may say you know Me, but I don't know you.

In Luke 6:46 it is recorded that Jesus said, "Why do you say, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things I say? You workers of iniquity. You who practice as a pattern of life lawlessness." What is that? Rebellion. "You rebels, your profession is useless." In fact, let me go beyond that, "Your profession is a form of profanity. It is taking the name of God in vain and it is worse than street cursing." The blasphemy of the sanctuary is always more awful than the blasphemy of the slum because it is a Judas' kiss to say, "Lord, Lord," and live a life of disobedience. It's not what you say, it's not what you profess. Lots of sayers on that day, but I don't know you, depart from Me, you who do lawlessness. It's what you do that's the issue. If you are genuinely converted, you will be converted unto good works which God

has before ordained that you should walk in them, Ephesians 2:10. So many are going to call Jesus, "Lord, Lord," and never submit to that lordship and never obey the will of the Father who is in heaven. To be in the Kingdom means to do the will of the Father. You say, "How can I do that?" Because you've genuinely been converted. And when you come to faith in Jesus Christ, you're transformed into one who loves God, longs to obey and hates sin. All religious activity, all religious profession, all Christian profession, no matter how fervent and no matter how orthodox that does not result in a pattern of obedience is lawlessness. And such people don't belong to the Kingdom. It's nothing but empty words.

The Greek of that brief statement in verse 23, "I never knew you," if you get the full rich meaning of the Greek it would go like this, "Not for a single moment have I acknowledged you as My own or known you intimately." And you could add, "You are forever expelled from My presence, you workers of lawlessness."

Now what makes this so shocking is the kind of thing the people lay claim to. Look what they say, verse 22, "Did we not prophesy in Your name?" It means to preach. "And in Your name cast out demons and in Your name perform many miracles." Wow. I mean, this doesn't sound like mundane stuff, this is not just, you know, common every day garden variety activity. To add to their respect for Christ, their orthodoxy, their fervency, their private devotion and public testimony, in Your name, in Your name, in Your name. They have demonstrated what they believe to be the power of God. They have preached. They have exorcized demons. They have done mighty works.

You see people like that today. Sometimes on television laying claim to being preachers of God, workers of miracles, casting out demons. That's not enough. Were these deeds genuine products of supernatural power? Well they certainly weren't genuine products of God, that's obvious or He wouldn't say to them, "I never knew you." Did they really do these things? Well surely they preached. Did they really cast out demons? Well there were some people in the book of Acts running around called the Sons of Sceva who did their best to exorcize demons and maybe they were trying to do that. Satan does try to cast out Satan. That's the folly of his divided kingdom.

But what about miracles? Could they pull them off? Well perhaps there were some satanic counterfeits and a whole lot of fakery. But they had a pretty impressive list, pretty amazing things. Even today there are preachers and healers and exorcists and miracle workers and lots of other folks saying, "Lord, Lord, look what we've done," and they're damned because they're deceived. Someone wrote, "Deeds of greatness as we deem them, He will show us were but sin, cups of water we've forgotten, He will tell us were for Him." We may not know what the realities are. Just because someone speaks well about Jesus, just because someone has an orthodox creed, seems fervent, seems passionate, is open in professing Christ, talks about what he's done and what he's seen God do. Doesn't mean they're in the Kingdom. The issue is what they do, verse 21. "He who does the

will of My Father who is in heaven." Obedience, "If you obey My Word," John 8:31, "then you're My real disciple." And back to Ephesians 2:10 again, "You are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before ordained that you should walk in them. By their fruits you shall....what?...know them."

So, Jeff O'Hara wrote, "Why call ye Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things I say? You call Me the way and walk Me not, you call Me the life and live Me not, you call Me master and obey Me not, if I condemn you, blame Me not. You call Me bread and eat Me not, you call Me truth and believe Me not, you call Me Lord and serve Me not, if I condemn you, blame Me not." It was all just empty words. And James put it this way, "Be not hearers of the Word only but...what?...doers because if you're hearers only, you are deceiving your own selves," James 1:22.

And then our Lord moves from the folly of empty words to the folly of empty hearts. Same exact situation, just cast in a different illustration. Verse 24 to 27, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house upon the rock and the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and burst against that house and yet it did not fall because it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act upon them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand and the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and burst against that house and it fell and great was its fall."

Here is the same issue exactly. What are you building your life on? You've got two builders here. And these builders represent a religious person, we could say in our terms a Christian, or someone who claims to be a Christian, a professing Christian. And they build their religious house. Both of them, by the way, look at verse 24 and 26, both verses begin, "And everyone who hears these words of Mine," they are both exposed to the truth, to the gospel, to the teaching of Scripture. Listen, professing Christians and possessing Christians, that is false Christians and true Christians may both believe the same theology. And they both be very busily engaged in building the same kind of superficial external visible spiritual house. They might belong to the same church. They might engage in the same activities. They might attend the same meetings. The difference is not in what you can see, the difference is in what you can't see. And it's very hard to tell the difference. That's why Jesus said, "The wheat will grow alongside the tares and don't you go in there trying to tear that field up and pull out those darnels, those false wheat because you can't tell them apart. You wait for the judgment of God, the angels will do that sorting work. The foundation is not visible.

Now I gave you a little earlier some kind of things that I look for if they can be of some help in discerning that perhaps a person is not a Christian, but there are many people that really are undiscernable. They're deceived, they're in the church, they make the claims and they're on their way to hell. And that is the greatest of all tragedies. You see, the real question is not whether they hear, it's



whether they do. It's whether they do. And only a storm is going to manifest the truth. Then you will know who's wise and then you will know who's a fool.

Now there are several similarities in these two builders, they both built a house. What does that represent? A life of spiritual activity. Let's say a life in the church. They both built it, are you ready for this, in the same place. Doesn't seem to be any geographical difference. How do you conclude that? Because the same storm hit them both. They must have been adjacent to each other to some degree, they're both subject to the very same storm. They build similar houses in similar areas and like true believers and false in the church, there are so many similarities that sometimes the difference can't be discerned. And by the way, the assumption here is that they both built the same way. With the exception of the foundation, there isn't any visible difference in the edifice. But here's the real issue. One built on *petra*, rock. And one built on *ammon*, you know the city of Ammon in Jordan, it means sand, literally means sand from the seashore. And you don't have to be an engineer, an architect, a builder to know anybody who builds a house on sand is a fool because when a storm comes, verse 27, the house built on the sand collapses. But when the storm comes, the house built on the rock bed, verse 25, stands.

Now we who live in sunny shaking California, so subject to earthquakes, understand the significance of a solid foundation. But sometimes we don't understand how vital it is in the spiritual realm, certainly the Pharisees of Jesus' time didn't. And by the way, this is an attack at the foundation of their religion. Superficially they looked holier than thou, but Jesus is assaulting them at the foundation. They had no regard for true spirituality of soul. They had no genuine forgiveness of sin, no cleansing, no purity, no integrity in behavior, they had no passion for God, they had no zeal to obey the Word at all costs. They prayed, yes, but they prayed to be seen in public. They fasted, yes, but they fasted to be thought of as spiritual and they threw ashes on their head in a public place so everybody would applaud their spirituality. They gave their alms but only when the trumpet blew and everybody turned around to see why it was blowing...and then they dropped their coin in the little receptacle on the wall of the courtyard of the temple to enhance their reputation among men. Yes they were religious but down at the foundational level it was sand. They brought their bodies to the house of prayer but not their souls. They worshiped with their mouths, but not their hearts. They were sticklers for some kind of religious ceremony, but took no thought about purity in their thought life. They boasted their orthodoxy, but disregarded the precepts of the Messiah.

We have it today, professing Christians whose lives are built on nothing but sand. And ultimately the test is going to come, it's going to come. And when it comes, sadly for those who built on sand, there's no remediation. It's over. It's the end. And the whole thing falls. That means hell. For those who built on rock, they go through judgment without moving.

Now as we think more deeply into this delusion, this deception that is so common, as I said, I think most people who claim to be Christians in the world are not, it's the many who go on the broad road and the few who find the narrow gate, let me just clarify these differences as we think about this magnificent illustration. Think about it this way, one built the easy way, the other the hard way. And it's easy to build on sand, you don't have to do anything, just build. You don't have to dig. You don't have to shore up. You don't have to build a retaining wall. You see, this tells you about a fool...a fool is always in a hurry, always looking for the quick results and the shortcut. Get it fast, keep it moving, no time for soul searching, no time for deep repentance, no time for building a sense of sin, just jump on get going. Fools are in a hurry and fools are superficial. And certainly we live in an age of superficiality. And if ever the church needed to be aware of this, it is now. We live in a culture of shallow sifting sand, people looking for some kind of instant answer to everything. But those instant answers collapse in the judgment. Even Christianity today has become so superficial. Where is the deep plowing? Where is the spade work? Where is the real repentance? Where is the deep dug foundation? Where is the brokenness of heart? Where is the mourning over sin? Where is the laying down of those heavy stones of a foundation? Charles Spurgeon put it this way, "Want of depth, want of sincerity, this is the want of our times. Want of an eye to God, lack of sincere dealing with one's soul, neglect of using the lance with our hearts, neglect of the search warrant which God gives against sin, carelessness concerning living unto Christ, much reading about Him, much talking about Him, but too little feeding on His flesh and drinking of His blood. These are the causes of tottering professions and baseless hopes."

Luke 6:47 and 48, however, on the other hand, says that the wise man dug deep. He went down to the rock bed, the Word of God, repentance. What does it mean to dig deep, Luke 6:47 and 48? Well it means, first of all, not to be in a hurry. This is not a quickie conversion, this is not a light confession. This is like Luke 14, this is counting the cost. A.W. Pink once said, "There are some who say they are saved before they have any sense of what it means to be lost." Those who claim Christ as their own without any thought of what that means may be fools, but the wise dig deep. They don't rush into some profession and later rush out again. I think about my friends. They had a shallow building. There was nothing there ever. Time revealed it.

The wise not only digs deep but he makes the maximum effort. And men are always drawn to the easy path and the church can fall into this and preach an easy gospel, easy believism that is called a cheap grace gospel, a sign up quick and don't worry about the details, they come later. Read the fine print after you've signed your name. But the one who is truly in the Kingdom, the one who is truly wise, the one whose life has a real foundation strives to enter in, forces his way in, takes the Kingdom by force, understands the tremendous soul-searching that is involved, counts the cost, learns the right way, makes the full commitment to the truth. He is emptied of self-righteousness, he is emptied of self-sufficiency. He knows he has nothing, not one commendable trait, characteristic deed or idea. He is overwhelmed with his own sin and inadequacy. He makes the maximum effort in the Lord's

strength to place the Word in his heart so that he might not sin. He is interested in genuine love relationship with the Lord and with the people of the Lord, not some routine of religious activity. He doesn't build his life on visions and experiences, but on the sound doctrine of the Word of God. He builds for God's glory, not his own. He seeks not the gifts but the giver. He seeks not the blessings but the blesser. He isn't like Simon in Acts 8 who wanted to buy the power and was a hypocrite. He wasn't looking for the goodies, he wanted God. There are always those who follow Christianity, chasing signs and wonders, even occasionally reading the Bible. They don't know God. And ultimately the day of testing will come and the truth will be made manifest.

Charles Spurgeon, again, like any faithful pastor understood the urgency of this and he wrote, "Whether your religion be true or false, it will be tried. Whether it be chaff or wheat, the fan of the great winnower will surely be brought into operation upon all that lies on the threshing floor. If thou hast dealings with God, thou hast to do with a consuming fire. Whether thou be really or falsely a Christian, if thou comest near to Christ He will try thee as silver is tried. Judgment must begin at the house of God and if thou darest to come into the house of God, judgment will begin with thee."

The test will come in the end on the day of judgment and the proof will be known. And the empty words and the empty hearts will all show up. Respectful, orthodox, fervent, active in private devotion, making public proclamations, busy building the religious life adjacent to others who are real Christians, only to have the judgment smash it because it has no foundation. And I would be unfaithful if I didn't tell you you've got to go back and check the foundation.

I remember some years ago when Patricia and I had bought a house and she's great at decorating the place. And it's always such a wonderful and lovely and commodious place that I'm always happy there. I was surprised to find out one time that termites were eating up the house that I couldn't see. And ever since that time I've always had this sort of malingering thought in my mind as I sit comfortably in my home, I wonder what's going on in those walls, what's going on underneath me. I can't help but wonder that. Occasionally checking out the foundation isn't a bad idea. And so occasionally we have someone come and do that just to make sure it's still there.

Spiritually that's what we're talking about here. You better be sure there's a foundation there and not just a life of activity without one. And if you are among the wise who came in genuine repentance, beating on your breast because you knew you had nothing, casting all your self-righteousness aside and throwing yourself on the mercy of the grace of God you fell on Jesus, you can be sure you're among the wise and you'll survive the judgment. The hymn writer put it this way, "The soul that on Jesus doth lean for repose, I will not, I will not desert to His foes. That soul though all hell should endeavor to shake, I'll never, no never, no never forsake." The earthquake from hell can't shake your foundation. I hope you can sing that wonderful song. Perhaps you've sung it often and now you'll sing it with new meaning. "My house is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I

dare not trust the strongest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is...what?...sinking sand." The false fool is going to see the whole thing crumble in the moment that he or she can do nothing about it.

It's a tragedy. And this was what Jesus was saying to those people, you are religious but you have no foundation. Your preaching, your exorcisms, your wondrous deeds, all your claims, all your orthodoxy, all the edifice that you have built will smash in the judgment. And I'll have to say I have no knowledge of you, I have no relationship with you. You are like those to whom Proverbs 30 and verse 12 is addressed there, is a generation that are pure in their own eyes but they are not washed from their filthiness.

Well, it's an unequalled sermon. It's a masterpiece of oratory. But it ends with a devastating warning and it calls for spiritual introspection. What about your foundation? Have you genuinely come to Christ with an attitude of repentance? Are you just a sayer, empty words? Or are you a doer, one who loves to obey? It's not the perfection of your life but it's the direction of your life. There is...there is not all the obedience you want but there is enough of it to evidence the work of God in you. Do you love the truth? Do you love the Word? Do you love obedience? Do you hate sin? Or is it just saying and not doing? Are you just empty words from an empty heart? Or are you a doer of the will of God who built the foundation on the rock who is Jesus Christ?

Such a powerful sermon, you would think might have a startling effect. The last two verses of Matthew 7 tell us, I wish it said, "The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes repented." It doesn't say that. It says, "They were amazed at His teaching for He was teaching them as one having authority and not as their scribes." You know what struck them? He didn't have any footnotes. What? They were really struck by the fact that He didn't have to quote anybody because whenever a rabbi gave a speech and wanted you to believe what he said, he would have some other authority that he would quote. Jesus didn't quote anybody. He didn't have any footnotes. And they just went away saying, "Isn't that amazing? He didn't have any footnotes."

Now what does that tell you? That tells you that the deception was so profound it was almost impenetrable even by Jesus Himself. That's how profoundly deceived very religious people get. Now there were some who believed but not the mob. It wasn't that long until the mob cried for His blood. Spiritual deception is a frightening thing. The god of this world has blinded their minds and nothing is a more effective blinder than a false sense of security, false religion, the most wicked ploy Satan has and the most wicked of that wicked ploy is a false Christianity. And so, we must begin the process of preaching the gospel to the church in order that we might free people from a damning deception. That's what Jesus came to do. Every faithful minister must follow in His path. Let's pray together.

Our Father, as we think about these tremendous truths we desire again that the Spirit of God would turn the searchlight on our own hearts and as Paul said that we would examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, that we would do a spiritual inventory as he said so that we can recognize that Jesus Christ is in us, unless indeed you fail the test. And what is the test? Not just a right theology, but a pattern of doing Your will, obedience to Your Word. If we continue to obey Your Word, then we're You're real disciple. That's the evidence of transformation, a passion for obedience, a passion to love and worship You and to have triumph over sin. And I pray for everyone who hears this message that such an inventory will be done in their own heart to confirm their spiritual condition. If it confirms their salvation, may there be joy and rejoicing. If such an examination reveals deception, O God, may there be repentance and transformation by Your grace and work that work in every needy heart, we pray for Christ's sake. Amen.

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