

Saying vs. Doing
Matthew 7:21-23; Titus 1:6
February 6, 2022
Greg L. Price

This is one of the most sobering passages in all of Scripture. It speaks of those who profess with their lips that Jesus is their Lord, but by their desires and actions they deny that to be true (Titus 1:16). Jesus is saying that He may be professed with one's lips, but denied by one's life one's unrepentant disobedience to God's commandments (Revelation 3:1).

When asked if they are a Christian, many in churches will quickly respond that they are because they went forward to receive Christ at an evangelistic crusade, or have been baptized, or are a member of a church, or attend worship on the Lord's Day. And indeed, we would say that such a person is a professing Christian. But Jesus warns us that not all professing Christians are true Christians.

What Jesus says in our text today is that there will be "many" professing Christians at the final judgment who will be cast away into hell. If that does not get the attention of us all who profess Jesus as Savior and Lord, we have either fallen spiritually asleep or are spiritually dead. The words of Jesus are true and must be received in faith by all who hear. Jesus does not want true Christians unsure of their salvation, but rather assured that they are united to Christ by faith alone. But He does not want us to have a mere profession of faith, but rather a true and living faith that bears the fruit of repentance, love, and obedience to Him and His commandments.

The main points from our text are: (1) The Contrast between False and True Disciples (Matthew 7:21-22); (2) The Profession of Jesus to Professing Christians (Matthew 7:23).

I. The Contrast between False and True Disciples (Matthew 7:21-22).

A. Jesus is drawing His sermon to a close—a sermon that intends to separate those who are His true disciples (in faith, repentance, love, and obedience) from those who only go through the lip-service of a mere outward profession of faith. Jesus has convicted us, challenged us, exposed us, and has brought us to bow before Him, confessing our sin in merely going through the outward motions of faith (Matthew 5-6). He has also revealed to us that there is a **wide gate and a broad way** and many walk that way to everlasting destruction, but there is also a **strait gate and a narrow way** and few walk that way to everlasting life (Matthew 7:13-14). He has also cautioned us to beware of false prophets within the church broadly speaking that come as wolves disguised as sheep, who can be identified by the fruit of their doctrine and the fruit of their lives (Matthew 7:15-20). Jesus now warns us not to be misled by a mere profession of Christ without love and obedience to Him. False disciples will be inclined to tune out Jesus and His warning here, but true disciples will take His warning very seriously and will be humbled by it, will renew their faith, repentance, love, and obedience.

B. The difference between false disciples and true disciples of Christ (according to Jesus Himself) is that false disciples are disciples in word only (they say—Matthew 7:21a), whereas true disciples are disciples in word and deed (they do—Matthew 7:21b).

1. The profession of false disciples is not necessarily different from that of true disciples ("Lord, Lord", Romans 10:9). Their profession appears to acknowledge Jesus as King, even as God. Their profession is filled with passion—professed twice for emphasis ("Lord, Lord"). It is a profession that "many" (not a few) will make on Judgment Day (Matthew 7:22). But it is a mere profession in words, not in acts of faith and loving obedience (Luke 6:46).

2. The profession of true believers begins in the heart by a supernatural work of God's

grace (regeneration) in giving us faith, repentance, love, and new obedience to Christ and His commandments. It is not a mere profession of the truth, but an inward work of God's Spirit that gives one the desire, love, and affection to speak and live for Jesus Christ (to deny oneself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus). One who is a true disciple does not have to be forced to keep God's commandments, to read his/her Bible, to commune with Christ each day, or to worship Him in the family and church. The true disciple wants to do so, even in his/her weakness and failure to do so (the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak). And when the true disciple fails to do the will of God (and this is most telling), he/she does the will of God by repenting, seeking forgiveness, and renewing love and obedience (and not for only the "big" sins committed outwardly, but for the heart sins committed inwardly—that is what Jesus teaches in Matthew 5-6).

3. Jesus adds to His warning that about which the false disciple boasts: supernatural and mighty works he/she claims to have performed in the name of Jesus (Matthew 7:22).

a. "In thy name" is listed first in the structure of the Greek sentence (all 3 times)—"in thy name have we not prophesied?" (etc.). This is the false disciple's profession of faith—the miraculous works were done in Christ's name (first, "Lord, Lord"; second, miraculous signs and wonders in Christ's name). Jesus says (in effect), "Beware when your profession of Christ is evidenced by miracles rather than by obedience."

b. Note that the 3 questions asked here by these false disciples expect from Jesus a "Yes" (when the negative *ou* is used in a question, it expects a "Yes", whereas when the negative *mē* is used in a question, it expects a "No"). In other words, Jesus does not deny that these false disciples performed miraculous wonders in His name (Judas).

c. Here is a clear warning not to look to miraculous signs as evidence that one is a true disciple of Jesus Christ. God can perform a miracle anytime He chooses to do so, but He does not call us to seek out and follow the miraculous, but rather to seek and follow Christ and His truth revealed in Scripture. Miracles can mislead; the fruit of love and obedience to the will of God in doctrine and life will not mislead. Thrill seekers follow claims to the miraculous, to visions, to healings, to prosperity; whereas truth seekers follow the teaching of Scripture and as summarized in a faithful Confession, Catechism, and Covenant, even if God does not heal a broken body or prosper your bank account.

d. God warns us throughout Scripture that miraculous signs and wonders will also accompany error and heresy so as to mislead those who are ignorant, deceived, and walking by sight, feelings, and experiences, rather than walking by faith in the truth of God's Word.

(1) God tests the faith and love of His people in obeying Him by means of miraculous signs (Deuteronomy 13:1-3).

(2) It is dangerous to our soul to be led by the miraculous (Matthew 12:38-40; John 2:23-25; John 6:30; 1 Corinthians 13:1-2). We do not need more miraculous evidence than Christ's resurrection. The problem with a sinner's unbelief is not that there is not enough evidence for the truth of the gospel; but rather that a sinner is blind to the light of evidence revealed in God's Word. We are warned that in the last days the papal man of sin will show forth signs and wonders so as to mislead many (2 Thessalonians 2:9,11-12).

(3) Here we see that God uses miracles performed by false teachers to deceive and to delude the ignorant and the unbelieving who look not to the truth of God's Word to confirm that which is miraculous, but who look to the miraculous to confirm itself. One who performs the miraculous is not to be followed if He does not evidence the truth and righteousness of Christ in what he teaches and in what he practices. Jesus says that the miraculous is not necessarily a true profession of faith in Christ.

4. Perhaps the most glaring contrast between a false disciple of Christ and a true disciple of Christ is that of Judas (a false disciple) and Peter (a true disciple). Judas like Peter was called to be one of Christ's disciples. However, Judas was never a true disciple and believer in Jesus Christ (John 6:64,70-71—"devil" means accuser). Judas outwardly professed Christ and was even given the power to do the miraculous

just like Peter (Matthew 10:1-2). He was even appointed to be the treasurer for the disciples (John 12:4-6). Judas hung himself in unbelief. Peter, however, was a true disciple of Christ though tripping over his tongue often, and even proudly disputing with Jesus that he would never deny Him, though Jesus said he would do so three times (Mark 14:30-31). And yet Peter was a true disciple whom Jesus kept from falling away (Luke 22:31-32). Judas (the false disciple) shows how close one can come to Jesus and yet be eternally lost. Judas (the false disciple) shows that it is not the miracles that one does in Christ's name that save one, but Peter (the true disciple) shows that it is the work of God's grace in saving a sinner through faith in Christ alone and in evidencing that faith through obedience to Christ. Peter evidenced that loving obedience—though he fell, he repented and renewed his loving obedience to His Lord and Savior even to the extent of martyrdom.

II. The Profession of Jesus to Professing Christians (Matthew 7:23).

A. The profession of Jesus is in stark contrast to their profession of Him. They professed to know Him. What does He profess?

1. "I never knew you"—not "I knew you at one time, but now I don't know you." These false disciples claimed to know Jesus, but they only knew certain truths about Jesus—they did not truly know Him in faith and love for Him, nor with a sincere desire and affection to please Him and bring Him glory by their words and deeds. Therefore, Jesus professes He never knew them regardless of what they professed. Are there more terrifying words in all of Scripture, "I never knew you"? These to whom Jesus speaks did not claim to be atheists, agnostics, idolaters, Satanists, or those who embraced a false religion. These were those who professed Christ with their mere words, but He did not profess them because they did not truly trust Him and evidence their faith by loving obedience to do His revealed will as found in Scripture. They were more concerned with being known as a Christian than in being a Christian.

2. "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." All the miraculous works that they profess to do in Christ's name, Jesus says they have been working iniquity, not righteousness or truth. Why? Because these works were not done in faith to Christ (Hebrews 11:6), nor out of love for Christ (1 John 3:18), nor are they done for the glory of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:31). Using the name of Christ was simply a formula or a ritual. They were taking God's name in vain for their own gain.

B. How can we flee the self-deception of those about whom Jesus here warns us?

1. Trust not in yourself and boast not in yourself, but make Jesus your Prophet, Priest, and King. Make Jesus and His promises your trust alone and your boast alone (Proverbs 3:5-6). Glory in the Lord.

2. Take care not to hide, ignore, or blame others for your sin, for sin blinds us to the truth and light of God. Sin leads to deception.

3. Be quick to repent of sin, rather than wallowing in it. The longer you wallow in sin, the more vulnerable you will be to deception.

4. Humbly receive correction from others rather than being offended. Be teachable. It is pride that leads to deception—humility restrains it.

5. Regularly examine your heart, speech, and conduct (Psalm 139:23-24; 2 Corinthians 13:5). Don't fear self-examination, but rejoice in it, for it is an evidence of grace. Always examine yourself in the light of Christ's grace, forgiveness, and love. Examination outside of that light brings only darkness and despair.

6. Beware of hypocrisy and inconsistencies in your life wherein you say one thing and do another thing, or act differently in public than you do at home. Hypocrisy is a form of lying that leads to self-deception.

7. Daily commune with Christ as Savior and Lord of your life in the glory of the gospel. Be a diligent student of His Word and fervently pray that you will do His will as found in it. Commit yourself to His

lordship over your entire life—hold nothing back and do His will even when it is difficult. If Jesus is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all.

8. Never forget that it is ultimately Jesus that prays for and preserves all those who are His (as He did for weak Peter). Jesus not only saves you by His grace through faith; He also keeps you saved now and for all eternity and will not lose even one of His sheep (John 6:39).

Copyright 2022 Greg L. Price.