

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Kept Out of Heaven.*"

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's Gospel verse-by-verse, but we paused to do something a little different last Sunday and this morning...

Back in November I started teaching a series in Sunday School called, "*Am I Saved? Seven Tests to Know!*" but I was only able to make it through five tests. The sixth test was going to be, "*Do I have a spiritual hunger?*" I wanted to tie this test into the end of the Feeding of the 5,000, and we've reached that point in Luke.

So I'm teaching two sermons from Matthew 7 – the first one was last week – that reveal why these seven tests are so important. Last Sunday and this morning are not tests, but I wanted to preach these sermons to prepare us for the test about spiritual hunger.

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One of the reasons I think these tests are so important is – like I shared with you last week – 83% of Americans say they're Christians.<sup>1</sup> This statistic tells me two things:

1. First, it tells me there are a lot of deceived Americans.
2. Second, it tells me there are a lot of churches that are allowing people to continue in this deception.

One of the big problems with this statistic is it's the opposite of what Jesus taught. Briefly look at **Matt 7:13...**

**Matt 7:13 Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are MANY. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are FEW.**

We looked at these verses last week.

Jesus clearly said:

- **Few** people will go to heaven.
- **Many** people will go to hell.

Then in **verses 21-23** Jesus singles out a specific group of people who are kept out of heaven...

It's people who thought they were going to heaven, but on the day of judgment learned they would be kept out. We'll talk about this group for the rest of the sermon. Look at **verse 21...**

**Matt 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'"**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=90356&page=1>

When Jesus says **On that day**, He's referring to the day He just discussed in **verse 21**. The day people **will** – or will not – **enter the kingdom of heaven**. This is the Day of Judgment when all unbelievers throughout history stand before the Lord at the Great White Throne and learn that they will be cast alive into the lake of fire instead of entering heaven.

Believers on the other hand stand before Christ at a different judgment called The Judgment Seat of Christ:

- We won't be punished for our sins, b/c Jesus already took that punishment.
- Instead we'll be rewarded for our faithfulness to the Lord.

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If you look at the words of the people in these verses, they clearly thought they were going to heaven:

- They are shocked.
- **Verse 22** ends with a question mark. They say, "*What Lord? How is this? How can this be?*"

The way they respond communicates their astonishment.

And I want to be honest with you that I think these are the most terrifying verses in all of Scripture.

The reason I say that is:

- These verses aren't discussing unbelievers or atheists. We expect unbelievers and atheists to be kept out of heaven.
- These verses aren't discussing people in false religions. We expect people in false religions to be kept out of heaven.

Jesus isn't talking to these people though...and that is the terrifying part:

- He's talking to people who call Him **Lord**.
- These are people who thought they were Christians.

They were clearly deceived about their salvation, and Jesus says **many** people are in this category. In **verse 22** He said **On that day MANY will say to me**, and that's these people.

As your pastor, I want to do what I can to help ensure you won't be one of these **many** people. I want you to stand before, the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ and not the Great White Throne Judgment.

So let's study these people to see what we can learn from them and why they're kept out of heaven...

First, in **verse 21** and **22** Jesus says they're going to say "**Lord, Lord,**" Twice it's pointed out that they address Jesus this way.

These words reveal their fervor or zealotry:

- Think of the times Jesus said, "Verily, verily," or "Truly, truly." He repeats Himself when He wants to make sure we don't miss something
- Think of the times in Scripture that God spoke to people and used their names twice:

- Abraham, Abraham – when He wanted to make sure Abraham didn't sacrifice Isaac.
- Moses, Moses – when He wanted to get Moses to approach the burning bush.
- In the New Testament – Saul, Saul – when He asked Saul why he was persecuting Him and then converted him to Paul.

Whenever God spoke to people and repeated their names, it revealed His urgency associated with reaching them.

Similarly, when these people say, “**Lord, Lord,**” it reveals their urgency associated with convincing the Lord they've done all these things for Him.

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Matthew is the Jewish Gospel. It was written to Jews. If anyone was fervent – or zealous – it was them, and listen to what Paul said...

**Rom 10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for [the Jews] is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that THEY HAVE A ZEAL FOR GOD, but not according to knowledge.**

They were zealous, but it was misdirected, and this is how...

**3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.**

God offers righteousness by grace through faith, but the Jews [**sought**] to **establish their own [righteousness]**. They wouldn't **submit** to the way God said man is **righteous** or saved. Instead they tried to be **righteous** by works.

And the problem with this is no amount of works – or zealousness – can save you, and this brings us to Lesson 1...

## **LESSON 1: EVEN SPECTACULAR WORKS WON'T GET YOU INTO HEAVEN.**

These are religious people in **verses 21** and **22**. They have done some number of things for God. But...

- Religion doesn't save people. Engaging in any amount of religious activity doesn't save you.
- These verses – maybe more than any others in Scripture – show that no amount of works get people into heaven.

In **verse 21** notice the words **my Father**. This stands in contrast to Jesus saying **your Father**, which He said 12 times before this in the Sermon on the Mount. This shows that they didn't have a relationship with God the Father, despite their works.

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A key verse to understanding this is **1 John 2:9**...

**1 John 2:9 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.**

This verse is making an important point:

- Before these people **went out**, they looked saved.
- It was only them going out that revealed they weren't saved, or weren't really **of us**.
- If they hadn't **went out** – which is to say if they had stayed in the church, perhaps even until they died – they would've always looked like Christians...until they stood before the Lord and heard these words from Him.

Why did they look saved, or why did they look like they were **of us**? Because of their works.

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If you follow me for a moment, **verse 22** is pretty much the OPPOSITE of what you'd expect to read...

Since Jesus keeps these people out of heaven, what would you expect to find out about them?

- They never served Him.
- They wasted their lives.
- They lived totally selfishly and only thought about themselves instead of God.

But that's not it at all!

- Far from having done nothing for the Lord, they claim to have done a number of things for the Lord.
- And there's no reason to think their claims are false.

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It might be hard to believe that unbelievers were doing these things, but let me give you Scriptural evidence of this...

First, these unbelievers claimed to **prophesy in [the Lord's] name**...

When we hear the word **prophesy** we quickly think of foretelling the future, but **1 Cor 14:3** says **the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.**

Prophesying has more the idea of forthtelling God's Word.

And let me ask you this...

- Are there a lot of very talented and gifted bible teachers who are not saved?
- How many pastors looked like great speakers, only for some scandal to break revealing they probably aren't Christians?

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They also claimed to **do many mighty works in [the Lord's] name.**

There are a number of places in Scripture that discuss unbelievers performing miracles:

- Think of Pharaoh's magicians.

- **Matt 24:24 [Jesus said], “False christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.”**

So unbelievers can perform miracles!

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This is what I would say and this is very important...

Their claims are not false – they did these things – but their claims are insufficient to get them into heaven. Because works don't save. Salvation has never been available for people who do enough good things for the Lord.

And this actually reveals their problem. You can tell from the way they speak that:

- Their confidence was in their works.
- They thought they were saved b/c of what they did.
- They actually disagreed with the Lord and said, *“Didn't we do these great things? How can you not be pleased with us?”*

They DIDN'T say, *“Didn't we repent of our sins and put our faith in you?”*

They seemed to have a very high assessment of themselves, but the issue isn't whether we have a high assessment of ourselves:

- The issue is how does the Lord view us? And if we're trusting in our works – instead of Him – He doesn't view us very well.
- The fact is if you have a high assessment of yourself, you're probably not going to heaven, b/c you see yourself as a really good person, versus seeing yourself as a sinner.

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And I want you to consider something else...

I think **verse 22** is written in an important way. If the works listed weren't spectacular ones, maybe we'd be tempted to think their works just weren't good enough. For example, if they said:

- *Didn't we go to church?*
- *Didn't we love our children?*
- *Didn't we help people?*

We could look and say, *“This isn't spectacular. Most people do this.”*

But Jesus presented the most dramatic works you can come up with. You have three examples of the highest services rendered to the cause of Christ and it's still not good enough.

So let me say this very clearly:

- You can prophesy...
- You can cast out demons...
- You can even perform miracles...

And be kept out of heaven. And that's not my opinion. That's exactly what Jesus said.

And why is that? Because no amount of good works – not even the most spectacular ones – can get you into heaven.

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I'll give you one perfect example of a person in these verses...

We know from our recent sermons in Luke that before Jesus sent out the Twelve Apostles on their missionary trip, He gave them supernatural power:

- **Luke 9:1 [Jesus] gave [the Twelve] power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases**
- **Then verse 6 says they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.**

When you read these verses there's no indication that any of the Apostles were unable to do these things. In other words, all twelve did these things.

Who was one of the twelve who **cast out demons and [did] many mighty works in Jesus' name?**

Judas! Judas is the premier example of what Jesus is teaching. He's the person you could expect to hear say the words of **verse 22**.

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I will tell you that I think the response of these people is going to be one of the most common responses on the day of judgment when people learn they're kept out of heaven. And you don't have to wonder if that's the case, b/c Jesus Himself said, **"On that day MANY will say to me..."**

When people find out they're going to go to hell, their first response is going to be something like these people said:

- *Didn't we do this for you?*
- *I've been a good person!*
- *What about all these wonderful things I did?*

But salvation has never been by works...

**Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 NOT A RESULT OF WORKS, so that no one may boast.**

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And this is what I would say to you as the flock God has put under my care...

If you think you're saved b/c you:

- Go to church...
- Perhaps serve in different ways...
- Perhaps look active in the body of Christ...

Then you're trusting in works versus trusting in Christ, and you could be in the same category as these people.

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Look at **verse 23** to see what Jesus says to them...

**23a And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you;**

Now pause right here.

When we talk about salvation, we'll commonly ask whether people "know the Lord." Because of that, we might read these words and think:

- Jesus said, "**I never knew you.**"
- Why didn't He say, "*You never knew Me. Isn't it about whether we know the Lord? Not whether He knows us?*"

This teaches that it's not just an issue of whether people say they know the Lord. Lots of people – especially those in cults – say they know the Lord...

- Mormons will tell you about Christ.
- Jehovah's Witnesses will tell you about Christ.
- Even Muslims will tell you about Christ, b/c they hold Him in high regard as a prophet.

But it doesn't mean the Lord knows them, which is to say He doesn't have a relationship with Him.

When you speak to people in false religions and they want to convince you they know the Lord, "*You might ask them: "Okay, but does the Lord know you?"*"

And this brings us to Lesson 2...

## LESSON 2: THE QUESTION IS, "DOES THE LORD KNOW YOU?"

These people claimed a certain intimacy with Christ. They speak to Him as if they have a relationship with Him. But...

- Jesus doesn't see it that way.
- He tells them it's the exact opposite of what they thought.

And I want you to notice, Jesus isn't ending His relationship with them with these words. He isn't cutting things off with them. Instead, He's saying there **never** was a relationship.

The words **I never knew you** are strong evidence against people losing their salvation:

- If people ever looked like they were Christians, it was the people in these verses.
- If we didn't know better, we would assume they were saved and then lost their salvation.

But Jesus says, "**I NEVER knew you.**" In other words, they were never saved. They were never Christians.

When it seems as though people are saved, but then they depart from the faith, when they stand before the Lord they won't find out that they lost their salvation. They'll find out they were never saved in the first place.

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If you write in your bible, circle the words, "**I never knew you**" and write, "*Gal 4:9.*"

**Gal 4:9** explains what's going on here. Listen to these important words...

## **Gal 4:9 Now that you have come to know God, OR RATHER TO BE KNOWN BY GOD.**

The issue is being known by God and the people in **verse 23** weren't known by God!

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The obvious question is, "Why didn't the Lord know these people?"

One reason has already been revealed:

- They trusted in their own righteousness versus the righteousness offered by faith.
- They never trusted Christ as Savior.

The other reason Jesus didn't know them is revealed in the rest of the verse...

### **23b depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'**

Even though these people performed some number of works for Jesus, and even though they repeatedly called Him "Lord," it seems to have been lip service. "Lord" means Master, but Jesus wasn't the Master of their lives. Twice Jesus pointed out their sinfulness:

- In **verse 21** He said, "**Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but THE ONE WHO DOES THE WILL OF MY FATHER.**" This gives the impression they weren't obeying the will of the Father.
- Now Jesus says they're **workers of lawlessness**.
  - NKJV and NASB say **practice lawlessness**
  - **1 John 3:4b** says **sin is lawlessness**, so this is Jesus' way of saying they're habitually sinful.

Jesus doesn't say they WERE **workers of lawlessness**. He says that's what they are. Currently. Presently.

And this brings us to Lesson 3...

## **LESSON 3: LACK OF REPENTANCE KEEPS YOU OUT OF HEAVEN.**

Listen to this verse from Paul. I think he must've had Jesus' words in mind when he wrote this...

**2 Tim 2:19 God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord KNOWS THOSE WHO ARE HIS," and, "Let everyone who NAMES THE NAME OF THE LORD DEPART FROM INIQUITY."**

The people in **Matt 7** named the name of the Lord. They repeatedly called Him Lord. But they hadn't departed from iniquity, which is to say they hadn't repented.

We're looking at the main problem with the false gospel of easy-believism. It doesn't preach repentance. So you have people who have been told:

- If you just believe...



- If you just say these words...
- If you just repeat after me...

You'll be saved.

But it leaves out repentance, and without repentance there's no salvation.

The reason easy-believism is so dangerous is it's so close to the Gospel. It is true that you're saved by grace through faith – or by believing – but true, saving faith – or belief – produces repentance. Saving faith and repentance go hand-in-hand.

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Let me show you just how important repentance is...

If you look back at **verse 22** you can see three things that can't replace repentance. People can...

1. Prophecy
2. Cast out demons
3. Perform miracles...

And even these things don't serve as substitutes for repentance. And that's the problem w/ these people:

1. They did some dramatic things, but they never repented.
2. They just kept **practicing lawlessness**.

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Easy-believism produces a lot of people who think they're saved, but:

- They haven't been regenerated by the Holy Spirit.
- Their lives have never changed.
- They continue in the same sins.

This isn't my opinion. This is exactly what Jesus says. He calls them **workers of lawlessness**. Sin is a habit or pattern that they didn't break.

But even while they're practicing sin, they think they're saved:

- They think Jesus is their Lord.
- They will stand before Him someday and say, "**Lord, Lord, didn't I do all these things for you?**"

But what good is all their lip service about Jesus being Lord if there's no repentance?

Let me ask a simple question...

What's harder:

- Saying the right thing?
- Or doing the right thing?

Anyone can say, "**Lord, Lord.**" But it's another thing entirely to turn from your sins to Christ. That's how Jesus really becomes Lord.

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Also, I want you to notice one more thing about **verse 23**...

The words **depart from me**, are said with a certain scornful dignity. They are not said with any amount of pity. I'm not saying Jesus doesn't have compassion on these people, but I am saying it doesn't come out in this verse. In this verse, Jesus simply casts them out of His presence, and there is no apology whatsoever. This is even more surprising when you consider this attitude is toward religious people who seemed to have served Him.

How do we explain the hostility Jesus seemed to feel toward these people?

I think the answer can only be explained by considering the hypocrisy of their lives:

- They said Jesus was Lord, but they didn't live like it.
- It would be better not to call Jesus Lord at all if you're not going to live like it. Let me say that one more time: It would be better not to call Jesus Lord at all if you're not going to live like it.

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I want to show you one more verse that will bring this brief two-sermon series to an end. Please turn to **2 Cor 13**. We won't turn back to Matthew.

This verse will set us up to the look at the sixth test next Sunday.

**2 Cor 13:5 Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!**

The context for this verse is the Corinthians were criticizing Paul.

I've noticed in ministry that those who are quick to condemn others are often guilty of worse sins themselves, and that's the case here. Many of these people were questioning Paul's apostleship, but they weren't even Christians.

So Paul turned the tables on them. He said:

- Instead of examining my preaching ability, you need to examine your faith.
- Instead of testing my apostleship, you need to test your salvation.

He wanted them to apply the same standard to themselves that they applied to him, and if they did that then they could **realize that Jesus Christ is in [them]...unless indeed [they failed] to meet the test!**

And this brings us to our last lesson...

#### **LESSON 4: EXAMINE YOURSELF TO SEE WHETHER YOU ARE IN THE FAITH.**

How many people do what Paul commanded the Corinthians to do?

- How many people examine themselves?
- How many people test themselves?

In other words, how many people ask the question: "*Am I saved?*"

What Paul said to these people is good advice for anyone. He could say to us:

- **Examine yourself, to see whether you are in the faith.**
- **Test yourself.**
- **Realize...that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!**

And realizing you failed the test would actually be a good thing, b/c then you'd realize this BEFORE learning it when you stand before the Lord. You'd have time to repent and be saved.

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If someone asked me why I was confident in my salvation, I wouldn't say, "Because I've repented and put my faith in Christ":

- That's not why I think I'm saved.
- That's how to BE saved.

If someone asked me why I thought I was saved, I would say because I have administered tests in Scripture to myself and they have given me confidence in my salvation.

We're saved by grace through faith, so we need to make sure our faith is genuine. The only way to know that is by testing it...

**1 Pet 1:6 You rejoice...you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ...9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.**

We should test ourselves to make sure our faith is genuine, and Peter says that is what trials do.

**James 1:2-3** says the same thing: **Count it all joy...when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that THE TESTING OF YOUR FAITH.** Trials test our faith and when we endure trials and come out the other side maintaining faith in God we can be confident in that faith.

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This is one of the five tests I covered back in Sunday School. I want to briefly review the others. They're on the bottom of your bulletin...

### **1. Test 1 – Have I experienced godly sorrow that produces repentance?**

This was the first test, b/c salvation begins with repentance...

**2 Cor 7:10 Godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.**

Paul contrasts two different types of sorrow:

- There's godly sorrow, which means sorrow over our sin. Sorrow over sinning against God. And this sorrow produces repentance that leads to salvation.
- And there's worldly sorrow:
  - Court rooms are filled with this sorrow when the verdict is read.
  - Children experience this sorrow when they learn they'll be spanked.

Being sorry means nothing. Paul says what's needed is a godly sorry that produces repentance.

## 2. Test 2 – Has my repentance produced fruit?

This is more of a test to see if your repentance is genuine...versus short-lived and false.

**Matt 3:8 John said, “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.”**

One way to tell if repentance is genuine is it doesn't simply stop, or put off something. It also starts, or puts on something.

## 3. Test 3 – Has my faith persevered through trials?

We talked about this a moment ago. Trials test our faith and reveal the genuineness of it. Many people have seemed like have a heart for the Lord, but then they go through something difficult and they end up resenting the Lord.

## 4. Test 4 – Is my life characterized by obedience?

Works don't save, but works are evidence of salvation.

## 5. Test 5 – Do I practice sinning?

This test might sound similar to Test 4, but Scripture differentiates between a life characterized by obedience and someone who practices sinning. In other words, b/c Scripture presents these as two different tests, so I chose to present them as two different tests. Believers sin, but they don't "practice" sin or live habitually sinful lifestyles. This is what Jesus meant in **verse 23** when He said the people **practiced lawlessness**.

If you'd like more info about any of the tests please check them out on the website.

And to give you a preview of next Sunday's sermon: *Test 6 – Do I have a spiritual hunger? or Do I hunger spiritually?*

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I would encourage you to administer these tests to yourself:

- As much as these tests can make people doubt their salvation and help them realize they're unsaved, the opposite is also true.
- These tests can also give people greater confidence in their salvation.

If you have any questions about anything I've shared this morning, Pastor Doug and I will be up front after service and we would consider it a privilege to speak with you.

Let's pray.