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Matthew 7:21 - 7:23



Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the stern warnings given by Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 7:21-23. Jesus warns that not everyone who calls him "Lord" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only those who follow the narrow path and are obedient to God. Gregg emphasizes that these warnings apply to everyone, including those in the church who may be involved in religious activities but are not truly following God. He encourages listeners to take these warnings seriously and examine their own lives to ensure they are on the narrow path to salvation.

Transcript

As we approach the closing of the Sermon on the Mount, we come to some very stern warnings on the part of Jesus to his disciples, and no doubt to anybody else who happened to be hearing. We know that while it would appear that he was giving this sermon to his disciples, there were multitudes around him, and some of them, I'm sure, were within earshot. He may have even, at this point, raised his voice and looked up over the disciples' heads at those who were on the outskirts and had these words to say to them.

It is hard to say, but in any case, whether a person is a Christian or not, they need to take heed to these strong warnings of Jesus. After all, Christianity is about Jesus, and obviously whatever he said is what we need to be concerned about if we desire to be Christians. And of course, when I say if we desire to be Christians, I proceed from the assumption that being a Christian, being a follower of Christ, is what it takes to have a relationship with God.

And therefore, these things are not minor issues, and the warnings that Jesus gives are not to be blown off rather lightly, as some people seem to do. For example, Jesus said back in Matthew 7, verses 13 and 14, and in some verses we read a couple days ago in this study, Now obviously, if you take that seriously, then Jesus is saying you cannot presume that you are saved unless, of course, and it would be no presumption at all in this case, unless, of course, you can guarantee that you are on the narrow path that leads to the narrow gate. And he indicated that there are few that can say that.

There are few that are on that path. And as you consider these warnings of Jesus, I hope that all of you, as I myself do, will apply it personally. Say, is this me? Am I on the narrow path, or am I not? Now, in the passage we come to today, it is Matthew 7, beginning at verse 21, Jesus said, I never knew you.

Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. I don't know if we need to read any further than that right now. Jesus said, on the Day of Judgment, there will be many who believe that they are Christians, and yet they are not.

Now, just as he had said a few verses earlier, that the way that leads to destruction is broad, and there are many upon it, whereas there are few upon the narrow way, he must be speaking, at least in part, of some of those many who are on that broad road. Who, when they come to Heaven's gate, as it were, when they are at the Judgment Day, they anticipate going through that gate. But they have not been on the right road.

If you are on the broad road, you cannot anticipate going through the narrow gate. The broad road will not go through the narrow gate. It goes through that great gate that leads to destruction.

It is the narrow road which leads to the narrow gate. Now, that narrow gate is the gate of eternal life. The road is the path one takes to get there.

And saying that it is a narrow road suggests that it is not traveled by great large numbers, nor is it the most comfortable or easiest road to stay on. Now, here we have Jesus saying that on that day, many will say, Lord, Lord, we have done these various things in your name. And, of course, on that basis, they will think that they deserve to go through the gate.

However, to their chagrin, they will find that they were never known by Christ. They were never approved by Him, and they will not enter Heaven. Now, let's look at this very carefully, lest you or I or our loved ones or the people we know, even the people in our church, be of this group.

After all, Jesus said there will be many in this class. Now, let me just say this as we move into this passage. If you are listening to this program in the United States or in some other country where a huge percentage of the population profess to be Christians, where there are huge churches with thousands and thousands of people in one congregation at times, you might say, well, Jesus seemed to be not quite on track here when He said there's not many who are finding this gate.

Well, I would rather believe Jesus than believe my senses. If there are many people in the churches, but Jesus said there are not many who are on that narrow road, then I'm going to have to at least be open to the possibility that many of the people who are in the churches are not on that narrow road. And it would apparently be some of those that

Jesus is speaking about here when He says, many will say, Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name.

We did mighty works in your name. We cast out demons in your name. Now, notice this.

These people are not mere casual professors of Christianity. There are people like that, of course. There are people who go to church maybe on Easter and on Christmas, and that's about the only time they ever darken a church door, and they hope that maybe they'll be paying their dues adequately to God by doing so.

And there are others who go to church maybe considerably more regularly, but they don't really have much involvement in the kingdom of God. They don't have much involvement in the things of God. Their lives are not really spiritually oriented.

And you might think that these must be the ones that would come to the gate of heaven and be denied admittance because they come to the church occasionally maybe, but they really don't have any place for God or for religion in their lives most of the time. But that's not the people that are described here. The people that are described here are people who are spiritually minded, people who are involved in ministry.

These are people who are prophesying. They are casting out demons. They are doing mighty works in Jesus' name.

Now, let's change our whole thinking here for a moment according to the word of God, if we can. Many of you probably have been aware that there are people in the church who are not really saved. But as I said, you have probably thought, well, if there are people in the church who aren't really saved, they're probably the ones who are not really very involved, the people who don't really get involved with the ministry, the people who don't really get involved with the spiritual things.

But actually, Jesus is here talking about persons, apparently, in the church. They called Jesus Lord. They thought of themselves as Christians.

And yet they're not saved, according to his own assessment here. And yet they were involved in ministry, very involved, prophesying. How many people in your church prophesy? You might even be in a church where no one prophesies.

But if you are in a charismatic style of church where there is prophecy, I dare say only a small percentage of the congregation probably really ever prophesy in the church. And if you want to consider how many people in your congregation actually cast out demons out of people, I dare say that number would be maybe even smaller. And so here we have people who are in that small group of very involved, powerful ministry people.

They're casting out demons. They're prophesying. They're doing mighty works.

And all this in Jesus' name. Now, obviously we're not here talking about a formal, liberal, dead church kind of person. We're talking about vibrant, charismatic, on fire kind of people, it would seem.

I mean, I must say, in the churches I have been in, I myself have never prophesied. I have cast demons out before, but not very often. And in the churches I've been in, although all of these things are believed in, there aren't really that many people doing them.

And yet there are many who will have done those things, who will not, in fact, turn out to be saved on the day of judgment. If that doesn't scare you a little bit, then Jesus' words are not having their proper effect. He intends to scare you a little bit.

You need a reality check here. You may be assuming that you are a Christian because you go to church, or because you are in the choir, or maybe even because you're the pastor of the church. Or maybe you're involved in some special ministry in the church.

Maybe even a deliverance ministry. Maybe you're prophetic. Maybe you're praying for the sick and they're recovering.

Maybe these are kinds of things that you are involved in, and you think, well, certainly I'm on the cutting edge of the kingdom of God. And what a shock it'll be for many, Jesus said, who think that. I'm on the cutting edge of the kingdom of God.

He says, no, you're not even in the kingdom of God. I never knew you. Now, if there are many who will be in that condition, does it not behoove us to consider what it is that distinguishes between those that Jesus is describing, who he never knew, on the one hand, and those who really are entering the kingdom of God on the other? Obviously, it has to do with which road you're on.

Are you on the narrow path, or are you on the broad path? Do you realize it is possible to prophesy in church, to pay your tithes? It is possible to be the pastor of the church, the choir director. It is possible to be the chief soloist in the church, the head of the Sunday school department, the principal prophet in the church, and maybe even one who runs a deliverance ministry in the church, to do all those things, and you're still on the broad road that leads to destruction? That's what Jesus said. Do you believe him? If you don't, you're taking a terrible risk with your soul.

Let me tell you, Jesus said what it is that gets people into the kingdom of God, or at least which people it is that can know that they're on that road. He said in verse 21, we're in Matthew 7, 21, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Now, it's immediately after this that he says, many will say, Lord, we prophesied, we did this, and he'll say, I never knew you.

Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. Now, notice this contrast. The ones that he says, depart from me, too, are the ones who are practicing lawlessness, although they are also practicing power evangelism and charismatic gifts and so forth, they are also practicing lawlessness, and because of that, they are damned.

He never knew them. He sends them off, away from his presence. But who are those who he receives? Well, he says, those who do the will of my Father in heaven.

It's not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, those who do the will of my Father. So we've got, in one class, Jesus said, those who do the Father's will, they are the ones who are saved. On the other hand, you've got those who are not saved, although they're very religious and very charismatic, yet they are practicing lawlessness.

Are you aware that it is possible to have a powerful ministry, to be a great preacher, a great singer, even a great healer, and yet to be disobeying God's will in your life? You know very well there are people like that. They've been caught. They've been caught in adultery.

They've been caught embezzling funds. And they've done those kinds of things all the while that they were preaching great sermons and even ministering to people in a powerful way. This is something that is a phenomenon that is hard to explain, but we cannot deny that it exists.

We know of many cases that have been broadly publicized. And therefore, be warned. If you are involved in the church, but you are not on the narrow road, you are not obedient to God in your life, then you are not on that narrow road.

You are on the broad road. Now, what does it mean when he says, He that does the will of my Father in heaven? What is the will of the Father in heaven? Well, there is a passage in Luke 6 which is somewhat parallel to this. He says in Luke 6, in verse 46, But why do you call me Lord, Lord? Does that sound familiar? Over in Matthew 7, he says, Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now, he says, Why do you call me Lord, Lord? But he then says, And you do not do the things which I say. Now, that's Jesus speaking. Why do you call him Lord, and you don't do what he says? It is obvious that when he says, It's not everyone who says, Lord, Lord.

It's those who do the will of my Father. That what he's referring to as the will of his Father is the same thing as the things he says. Why don't you do what I say? Jesus is the one who is sent by the Father to reveal what the Father's will is and, of course, to redeem us from all those times that we have violated it.

And you might say, Well, this doesn't seem to make sense because Jesus seems to be saying that I have to do something to be saved. I need to do the will of the Father or else

I won't be saved. I need to do the things that Jesus says or else I won't be saved.

And all this is true. I mean, Jesus does say that. How could anyone say it isn't true? I realize that the way that some people try to argue this is that they say, Well, what Jesus is teaching here is for a different dispensation.

We live in a time where you don't have to do what God says, but in a later dispensation in the kingdom age, then it will be necessary to do what God says. Well, of course, that's ridiculous. It does not agree at all with anything in the Scripture.

There's not one place in the Bible, in the writings of Paul or elsewhere, that say that we don't have to do what God says. There's no place in the Bible that says we don't have to do good works. We do have to do good works.

It's the teaching of Scripture throughout. And Paul teaches it as much as any other teacher in the Bible does, maybe more than most. For example, in Titus chapter 1, Paul indicates that those who are lost fit this description.

This is Titus 1.16. He says, They profess to know God, but in their works they deny him. Now, Paul's not talking about some other dispensation. He's talking about the church.

He's the apostle of the Gentile church, is he not? Paul says, These people profess to know God, but you can tell they don't, because their works prove it. In their works they deny him, being abominable, disobedient, and unqualified for every good work. Now, Paul is describing people who are not saved.

He's talking about people who profess with their mouths that they're Christians, but they prove that they are not by their works, and they are disqualified for every good work. Later in the same book, in Titus chapter 2 and verse 14, Paul says that Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for himself his own special people who are zealous for good works. Now, this says that when Jesus purifies people, they are zealous for good works.

If you are zealous for something, it is that which you will pursue. You can look at anyone's life and see what they're zealous for. They might be zealous for sports.

They might be zealous for fast cars. They might be zealous for fast women. They might be zealous for money.

They might be zealous for some entertainer's career. They might be fans of some celebrity. You can tell when somebody is zealous for something because their life takes its shape around the pursuit of that thing.

Now, when Jesus purifies a people, it says they are zealous for good works. Now, if a person is not zealous for good works, according to Paul, they have not been purified.

They have not been redeemed from every lawless deed because Paul says that Christ redeemed us from every lawless deed and purified for Himself a people who are zealous for good works.

If you are part of that purified and redeemed people, you are zealous for good works. Now, what does that mean? That means that your heart is zealously pursuing the right thing before God that you want more than most other things. I think, ideally, more than anything in the world.

I mean, the true converted person has a heart that is after the will of God. Now, if you are a person who says, well, all I really want to make sure is I'm not going to hell and then I want to pursue my own selfish lifestyle and do what I want, well, good luck. You're not going to get there.

That's the broad road that leads to destruction. And you're going to be one of those people who say, Lord, I went to church in Your name. I sang songs in Your name.

I did all these things in Your name. And He'll say, well, that was a shame. What a waste of your time, man.

I never knew you. The only people God has ever known are those that are zealous for good works. That's what Paul said.

That's what Jesus said. That's what the whole Bible teaches. James says that faith that has no works is dead and it cannot save anybody.

Now, it's a shame that the gospel has been preached differently than this because it has resulted in masses of people in America and Europe who profess to be Christians but who don't even know God. And they show it by their deeds. With their mouths they profess to know God, but in their works they deny Him.

And they are not full of good works. They're not zealous for good works. And as Jesus suggests, they did not do the will of the Father.

They might do some things that are very religious and even some things that are very powerful and charismatic. I hope the gravity of this statement really sinks in because so many Christians, and Jesus is talking about them right here, so many Christians, I'm using the word Christian to mean those who profess to be Christians and who go to church and who certainly regard themselves to be Christians, they just assume they're going to heaven, and they live their lives as if there was no sacrifice required, as if they didn't have to do what Jesus said day by day, moment by moment. And yet a true disciple of His is one who has made Him Lord.

Not simply someone who has said, Lord, Lord, but someone who does what He says. Now, I can hardly imagine anyone getting to heaven who has had access to the

teachings of Jesus and has not studied them and pondered them, meditated on them in order to know how do I fulfill this in my life. I know two kinds of people in the church right now, and I've been in the church all my life, but I've been in the ministry for 30 years.

I have observed over those 30 years really quite a few categories of people, but I could draw a certain dividing line between two types, and one is the type that simply assume they are saved, and they don't read their Bible very much, or if they read it, they read it casually, they read it with maybe a dutiful devotional every morning or something like that, and yet they don't really, every day, moment by moment, know or care to know whether Jesus has given instructions about the very decisions they have to make that day in life, in their family, in their job, in their finances. It's just not that important to them. The other kind of Christian that I meet, and I know a very large number of them, well, I shouldn't say a very large number, Jesus said there's few, but I mean, I know quite a few, are people who they read their Bibles all the time, not just because, not out of some kind of religiosity, not because they're trying to prove doctrines that they prefer to believe in, or anything like that, but they read it because they're seeking to know the mind of God.

They want to do what God said. They're zealous for good works. Now, I know people like this, and maybe you do too.

Maybe you are one of them. I hope you are. Because it's very difficult for me to think that a person who knows what Jesus said, or at least has access to find out what Jesus said from the Gospels, but who has very little interest in studying, meditating, trying to discover how these teachings will impact my life, what decisions I will make differently because of them, a person who does not make this serious approach to them, I simply don't see how that person could ever be described as zealous for good works.

Because zealousness is seen in dedication, in obsessiveness even. And a person who is a follower of Christ should be obsessively concerned to know what did Jesus say, the decisions I have to make today. Did Jesus give me any words about this? How can I live to please Him who is my Lord? He who purchased me.

He who purified me that I might be zealous for good works. He who now owns me. What does He want me to do today? What does He want me to do right now? What does He want me to do a half hour from now? What does He want me to do when I'm off work today? What does He want me to do with this money when I get my paycheck? Anyone who does not think this way is not thinking, in my opinion, in the way that these people who are disciples think.

And therefore it seems to me that if there are two types of people like that, the type that are serious about doing the will of God must be the ones that Jesus is talking about as those who do the will of His Father. Ones who are not serious about it sound much more like the many who will say, Lord, Lord, and He'll say, I never knew you. Unfortunately,

we'll have to stop here and continue next time.

Sorry to have to break, but please tune in next time and we will consider further the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount.