

“LORD, LORD” IS EASY TO SAY

A Meditation on True, Saving Faith from Matthew 7:21-23

John Newton was a corrupt, drunken, immoral, slave trader before he met Christ, was radically converted, and called to the ministry. He was saved by the grace of God, and he described that grace in the classic hymn he penned “Amazing Grace.”

Newton once said, “If I ever reach heaven I expect to find three wonders there: First, to meet some I had not thought to see there; second, to miss some I had thought to meet there; and third, the greatest wonder of all, to find myself there.”

I believe Newton’s expectation of heaven will be typical for all of us who make it there. Just be sure that you are among those who finally arrive at heaven’s shores.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus exhorts us to enter the narrow gate, and to travel down the hard road—the only road that leads to life. Then Jesus warns us not to be deceived by false prophets, who will try to divert us. Following that is a sobering passage where Jesus admonishes us not to be self-deceived—and many are. Therefore, we need to build our lives upon the Word of God, which means hearing, and putting into practice what we hear.

As a pastor and a Christian, no verses have haunted me more than those found in Matthew 7:21-23, where Jesus says, “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. 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?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” Jesus said *many*, not just some or a few or a handful, but *many* are going to be in for a rude awakening on “that day”—the day of judgment.

Many will presume that admission into the kingdom of heaven will be no problem. They will be surprised. A few years ago I took my family to Florida for a vacation, and heard on the news that many people bought discount tickets to Disney World, but they were bogus, counterfeit tickets. They thought they had the real McCoy; they strutted up to the gates with confidence, yet they were denied access. If we had purchased our tickets in advance, I think I would have started to get nervous.

We want to make sure that we are ready on “that day.” Are you? Are you sure? To be ready for that day, Jesus tell us what *not* to rely on, and then what *to* rely on.

To begin with, don’t rely on your doctrine. Doctrine is very important. We are to grow in knowledge, and we are to seek after wisdom. But you can be a theologian who has written books and articles for scholarly journals and still go to hell. John Stott has noted that the confession “Lord, Lord” is orthodox; it’s sound theology. “Lord” can mean “sir,” but it is also used as a divine title. In a confession it means Jesus is equal to God the Father. You might be thinking, “Aren’t we supposed to confess that Jesus is Lord?” Yes, we are. This confession is essential to salvation (Rom. 10:9). What’s wrong with the confession here is that it’s hypocritical. As Jesus asked elsewhere, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and not do what I tell you?” (Lk. 6:46). Orthodoxy is insufficient without obedience.

Jesus also says not to rely on your ministry. The people who were calling Jesus “Lord, Lord” were also prophesying, casting out demons, and doing many mighty works. And they were doing it all in Jesus’ name. This was probably very impressive to outsiders. Jesus wasn’t impressed in the least: “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.” These are among the most frightening words in all of Scripture. Eternal life is to know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent (Jn. 17:3). It is possible to claim to do all kinds of good things for Jesus, like Judas did, yet not really know Him.

Did you observe who Jesus was calling “workers of lawlessness”? Not terrorists or murders or atheists, but highly religious people. He was responding to people who go to church faithfully, and, in addition to that, serve in the church.

Don’t rely on your doctrine or your ministry; rather rely on your love to do the will of God. Jesus 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 who is in heaven.” Are you doing the will of God? That’s the issue. We’re not saved by works, we’re saved by faith alone; but the faith that saves is never alone. True saving faith is always accompanied by a desire and delight to do God’s will. By Wayne Christensen/Fox Lake Community Church/ See “**Permissions**” for reproduction authorization.

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