

Not Everyone Will Stay

by Rev. Philip Ayers

I. The Introduction

A. Scripture Text

Matthew 7:21-23, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name cast our devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."

B. Serious Question

In the midst of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus startles the crowd by pronouncing, "Not everyone who cries Lord, Lord will enter heaven." Do you mean to tell me that I may not enter heaven? How can that be? I thought I had done all that was needed to enter heaven. It shocks me to think that God would deny me access into His presence. This is the thought of many well meaning people in church today. When I say well meaning I mean it. These people have great works to verify their conception of salvation. They are Sunday school teachers, deacons, tithers, committee chairpersons, choir directors, musicians. They have been baptized, and are members of the church. They may even be preachers.

C. Shocked in a Dream - Illustration

I awoke several nights ago from a dreadful dream. I dreamed I died and went to heaven. I was standing in a crowd of nice looking people. One by one the people faced Christ. I could not wait for my turn to speak with Him. Soon the time came. But I was not allowed to speak. I heard Him say, "Your name is not written in the book." (Revelation 20:11-15) I could hardly believe my ears. What do you mean my name is not there? I am a preacher. I have led people to you, preached hundreds of sermons, buried your saints, married your children, and baptized your believers. I have prayed for the sick, and labored in your congregations. I have spent whole nights at a time holding the hands of your people in harms way. I must be there. Please look again. But He said, "You must leave now! I do not know you!" Thank God I woke up. Not everyone who cries Lord, Lord will enter heaven!

II. The Text Applied

A. Matthew 7:21

Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." 1. The application is for all people. Notice Jesus says every one. The Bible says that

all people must bow before Christ and give an account of their words and deeds. No one is exempt. Also, take note that Jesus says everyone faces Him directly, "saith unto me." Christ is the judge who all people will answer to. There is no one else in all of heaven who can replace Him. 2. The appeal is to all. Christ alone is worthy. Notice the theme of verse 21. It is entering and staying in the kingdom of heaven. This goes to the most important thought on the mind of God. - a personal relationship with you. God has shown His great love and concern for our eternity. He gave mankind His only Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus paid the debt for our sin by dying on the cross. God took the initiative by providing His Son to die on Calvary, be buried, and arise the third day. Our part is accepting the will of God for ourselves. Jesus said those who enter the kingdom of heaven are those who do the will of the Father, "... but he that doeth the will of the Father." So then, who are the ones who do God's will? Is it those who just obey His commandments and follow His Word? Not everyone will stay in the kingdom of heaven.

B. Matthew 7:22

Jesus said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?" 1. The day of accountability. Who are the ones that will not stay in the kingdom heaven on that day? Understand there is a day of judgment coming. The Bible says in Romans 14:11-12, "For it is written: As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then, every one of us shall give an account of himself to God." The Bible says John 5:22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." The Old Testament prophets spoke of this day. It is the consummation day of Messiah's Kingdom and the Day of Judgment upon man. II Thessalonians 1:7-10, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with the everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." So, who stays and who goes? 2. The description of those in the text.

First, those who cry Lord, Lord, will not stay. Jesus requires a personal relationship with you, not one of an acquaintance. These ones Jesus is speaking to have no personal relationship to Him. They bring light upon this truth by trying to remind Jesus of all the great things they have done. The people say that they had prophesied in His name. They proclaimed His works. To prophesy is to forthtell what Jesus has already foretold. These people preached and taught others about God, yet they will not stay in the kingdom of heaven. Sunday school teachers, preachers, pastors, seminary professor, and evangelists are not allowed to stay with Jesus.

Second, Jesus says those who cast out devils in His name will not stay in the kingdom of heaven. These people misunderstood the power they processed by using God's Word. The devils responded to God's speaking, not them. Yet, they took this to mean they were OK with God. They are not. They will not stay in the kingdom of heaven. It is the Word of God that

causes the demonic forces to move, not the deliver of his Word. The Bible says in Hebrews 4:12, "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and shaper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul, and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." As Michael W. Smith sings, "Its all about you Lord, its all about you", not us.

Third, Jesus says it takes more than doing wonderful works to stay in the kingdom of heaven on "that day". On that Day of Judgment every thought, word, and deed that was done or imagined will be brought before the only righteous and holy Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ. My friend, it's not about your money, nor is it about who you know in high places. It is not about the buildings you helped build, or the new carpet you put in the sanctuary, or the painting of the church. It's not even about how many people you introduced to Jesus. All those are good things, but they mean nothing to Christ, unless you have a personal relationship with Him. Christ requires knowing you, one on one. I am afraid so many people do not have this relationship. Christ is aware of who they are, but not intimate with them.

3. The day of salvation illustrated. I went with one of my deacons to visit an elderly man in our community. He was diagnosed with cancer in both lungs, and not given very long to live. He was not a Christian, but an outstanding man of the community. Many times, I heard accounts of his good deeds. It was said of him that he would give you the shirt off of his back.

The person attending to him invited us in. Jim was sitting on a couch in his living room with a blanket over his lap. I sat down beside him. After the usual meaningful chatter, I asked him to tell me about his standing with God. He began to tell me of his good memories of church as a kid. He said he went to Sunday school at my church years ago. I asked how old he was, and said eighty. He continued to explain that he didn't attend church like his godly mother and father had. He bragged on their faithfulness to the church, and how Christian they were. I tried to intervene in his explanation by asking about his relationship with God. He continued to excuse his lack of attention to church attendance, but was quick to say he had helped many of my members over the years. Then, he opened the door for the gospel to enter in. He asked if that wasn't enough. I said all those things are good, but that they were not enough. He looked me straight in the eye and said, "You are wrong." Jim was convinced he was OK with God. Our current verses came to my mind and I quoted Jesus, "And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you workers of iniquity." I asked if he knew what this verse was saying. He replied that he did not. I told him that these people who were standing before Jesus were not allowed to stay with Him, because they based their relation with Him simply on the good things they had done. I told him that Jesus wanted to have a relationship with Him that is more personal than a bunch of do's and don'ts. I asked him if he remember his love for his departed wife, or mother, or father. Tears welled up in his eyes as he replied, "Yes." I said that is what Jesus wants with you, only better. I asked him if he had that kind of relationship with Jesus. He said, "No." I opened my Bible and showed him, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) I showed Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." I read to him Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of

works, lest any man should boast." We looked at the gift as being the gospel, the death, burial, and resurrection the third day according to Scripture of I Corinthians 15:1-4. Then, I asked him if he would like this free gift of everlasting life. He asked how to do that. I explained to him that God was calling him to repentance from his sins. I told him he needed to turn from his old thinking that he was alright, and accept the fact that God says he is a sinner. I told him the first sermon that Jesus preached was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 4:17)." I told him that Jesus was asking him to come to him right now (Revelation 22:17). I impressed upon him the need to acknowledge Jesus as God's Son and the only one who can save him, and give him everlasting life. I quoted Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I asked him if he would like to do that through a prayer. He said he didn't know how to pray. I asked him to pray after me. I said you repeat what I say and mean it from your heart, and God will save you right now. We prayed, "Our Heavenly Father, I believe that Jesus Christ is your Son. I believe that He took my place on the cross and died for my sins. I believe He was buried, and rose again to life on the third day. I ask you, Heavenly Father to forgive me of my sins, because of Jesus. I ask Jesus to come into my heart now and save me. I thank you God for saving me. I pray in Jesus name, Amen." I asked Jim if he meant it, and he said he did. He thanked us for coming. Soon we left and returned to the church. The question is why would he stay in the kingdom of heaven and not the ones mentioned in the Bible?

C. Matthew 7:23

1. The reality of a need for a personal relationship with Christ. The answer is found in the understanding what Jesus meant when He said, "And then (on that Day of Judgment) will I profess unto them, I never knew you ..." This means He never knew them at any time. Could you be in this position? He knew of them, but he did not know them as individuals. Yes, He knew what they were doing, but not as His children. Jesus is saying these people never were saved. Non-saved people will not stay in the kingdom of heaven. John 10:14 says, "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." Jesus does not address these people by name. He did not say Bill, or Sue, or Mary. He refers to them as "you." It reminds me of when I worked for the railroad. I had many acquaintances. I worked with many people that I did not really know. I spent hours with them on the job. They were work companions, but they were not my friends. I never knew their names, only their nicknames. I referred to many of them as, "Will." It is sad, but there are many "Wills" out there who Jesus does not know personally. Not everyone who calls Jesus Lord will stay in the kingdom of God. Jesus addresses these people with, "I never knew you." The understanding here is one of intimacy, such as a marital intimacy between a man and woman. He did not know them intimately. These people may have claimed Him, but they never trusted Him with their soul.

2. The reality of not having a personal relationship with Christ. Jesus says to these individuals, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." The truth is nothing we can do in this life can make us fit for heaven apart from knowing Jesus Christ. The prophet Isaiah said, "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6)." Jesus is actually saying, "Ye who transgress the law." Jesus declares these people's work to be

unworthy as a guaranty for entrance into heaven. You may be on the Mission Board, or be the head of a charity organization. Perhaps you have given large sums of money to the building of Liberty University. No matter what you have done, it counts for nothing unless you first know Jesus Christ. There is only going to be two statements heard by all of us who arrive in heaven, regardless of your theological beliefs and denominational backgrounds. Either you will hear, "Depart from me", or "Enter into the joy of the Lord (Matthew 25:23)."

III. The Invitation

A. What is your relationship with Christ dependent upon?

1. Self-deception. Are you deceiving yourself? Did you make a verbal profession of faith in Christ when all the time you knew in your heart you did not believe? The passing of time will trick you into believing your profession was real. Was repentance part of your salvation experience? Romans 2:4 says, "Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads toward repentance?" Did you turn around in your thinking about God and sin? Romans 2:5-6 says, "But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds." We are biased in our own favor. Pride will keep us lost. We develop a false assurance - once saved always saved, when in actuality we were never saved. Simply because we prayed a prayer, or walked an aisle in a church, does not prove salvation. We must self-examine ourselves. II Corinthians 13: 5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?" Somehow, we allow all that we do for Jesus to blind us to the truth. Not all will stay in the kingdom of heaven. We allow all of what we do to replace an intimate relationship with the One we seek. The devil leads us into a balancing act between the "do's and don't's" of religion. There is never any time to spend resting with Jesus. We never have the commitment or time to spend with Him. There is no rest day in our life - no Sabbath Day. But, we say, "Christ understands that, we are serving Him!" The devil keeps us busy, and we think its God. How tragic? There never was an intimate relationship with Jesus, only an acquaintance. Have you ever come to Christ? Did you really give your life Christ, and was there a real turning from your old ways? Both salvation and repentance are gifts from God.

2. Secret sin. At one time, it would surprise me to have a devoted worker come into my office and confess a habitual sin in their life. It does not surprise me any longer. But one thing does. These people's unwillingness to accept the truth of the Scripture which says that a person living in a known sin may be lost, and that they should consider their relationship to Christ. Galatians 5: 17-21 declares, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to another; so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you be led of the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, reveling, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which

do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Jesus said to these people who were standing before Him, "You that work iniquity." In the purest translation it means those who practice lawlessness over and over again. Time magazine quotes a survey of Christians on the question of adultery. They found 31% admitted to an adulterous affair. Christianity Today found 23% of Christians polled admitted to adulterous affairs, and 41% admitted to inappropriate acts. The same survey says 62% of the population sees no wrong in adultery. My friends, profession of faith that is genuine does not carry with it these testimonies. Not everyone will stay in the kingdom of heaven. Repentance is needed. Is there secret sin in your life? Have you justified it? Do you and Christ have a special understanding that excludes you from accountability? Is this even an issue with you? If you are saved, it is!

B. Will you accept Jesus? It is time to come face to face with who you really are. Look deep into your soul and mind. Is Jesus there? Romans 8: 16 testifies to us that, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Romans 10:8-10 invites us to Jesus. "The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the Word of faith, which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Jesus says to come to Him. The church says come to Him. Have you come to Jesus Christ? I am going to ask you to bow your head with me, and ask God to help you be honest. Will you ask Christ to save you? Will you admit you never have had a change of heart? You never have turned from your old self. Your relationship with Christ is based upon your reshaping of your ideas, and all the great accomplishment you have done for Him. You have gone through the right steps, but you never have come to Christ with a willingness to give your life totally to Him. Will you come to Him now? Will you admit you have head knowledge of Him, but you are not sure of your destiny, if you were to die today? You can be sure.

Our Heavenly Father, I come to you now, and I ask you into my heart. I want to repent of my sins. I admit I have never turned from my way of doing things. I confess to you that I am a sinner in need of saving. I believe that Jesus Christ is your Son. I believe He lived a sinless life and that He paid the price for the forgiveness of my sins by dying on the cross, being buried, and arising from the dead on the third day. I want His forgiveness and everlasting life. I ask you, Jesus, to save me and to be my Lord. I thank you God for saving me today. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

Now, I am going to ask you to share that commitment publicly. I am going to ask you stand. Jesus called people publicly to salvation. He said in Matthew 10:32, "Therefore whoever confesses me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven." Will you stand for Jesus? For those who are standing, I welcome you to the family of God!

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