

One Foot In The Aisle And The Other In Hell

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I have been to the stone marker in Exeter, New Hampshire which marks the spot where George Whitfield preached his last sermon. He preached in the fields of Exeter on September 29, 1770 to a crowd of 4,000 in the open air. His chest was heaving from asthma and he stood bolt upright for two hours proclaiming the glories of Christ Jesus his Savior. His text was taken from 2 Corinthians 13:5 which states,

“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 ye be reprobates?”

As the great Whitfield preached, his voice pierced the autumn air as he cried out, “Works, works. Can a man get to heaven by works? I would as soon think of climbing to the moon on a rope of sand.” Whitfield added a sermon and died the next morning. To the day he died, he preached the necessity of one being born-again. He shook America with that message, friends, during the Great Awakening. Whitfield preached for true conversions in his day and his message was “Ye must be born-again.”

If George Whitfield was alive today he would be greatly alarmed at what passes for the gospel in our land. He would be shocked by the irreverent behavior of most ministers in the pulpit and he would be saddened by the great many who sit in our churches and have their names on the church membership roll but their names are not written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

We live in a day, friends, in America where the majority of church members are in an unconverted state. We live in the day of the unconverted church whereby a good too many have walked an aisle, repeated a prayer, believed a verse and a fact about the death of Christ and made a decision to become a Christian in the same careless manner they would make a decision to join a health spa. They occupy our pews and serve on our committees and are very vocal about their profession of faith but they’ve never been awakened to their lost and ruined condition. They have never been convicted by the Holy Spirit of their sins and they’ve never come savingly to Christ through a true work of grace upon the heart in regeneration. They sit proudly as chairman of the deacons; they teach Sunday School class; they sing in the choir and some even stand behind the pulpit and they have one thing in common with the foolish virgins who had no oil of testimony in their lamps and that is this very fact: they strongly believe themselves to be true

believers but they are lost, lost, lost and they are on their way to a terrible place called “hell.” Hell builds up every day with unconverted church members who sit in church with one foot in the aisle and the other in hell.

And that’s the title of my message today, friends: One Foot In The Aisle And The Other In Hell. My text is found in the gospel of Matthew 7, beginning in verse 13. You can turn in your Bibles there now. I want you to know that Jesus didn’t make it easy to be a follower of him. He turned away the rich young ruler and many who believed on him because of his many miracles, he did not commit himself to them because he knew what was in their heart. Listen to me friend, you may be able to deceive yourself, you may be able to fool your family and friends with your profession of faith, but Jesus knows your heart and he knows if you are sitting upon a false foundation of self-righteousness and good works. If you are deluded, if you have been cheated by the gospel of this day, a gospel that is no gospel because it is so diluted it does not point you to a bloody cross and to a risen Lord who reigns on a throne, a risen Lord who demands repentance, a submission, a surrender, the gospel you may have swallowed hook, line and sinker is a feeble counterfeit that could not save a flea. The Jesus you have been told about is so impotent and shrunk down to man’s size that he just couldn’t save anybody.

Listen friend, you have never seen the rottenness of your vile and wicked heart. You have never been lost and realized your need of a Savior. You have never seen a revealed Christ. You have never had a work of conviction of sin upon your heart and conscience. You’ve never turned from your wicked sins in true gospel repentance. And you have never had your heart of stone turned into a heart of flesh through a work of God exercised upon you in regeneration and thus, you have never been truly united to a living Lord in saving faith. For years, you have served your church faithfully. For years you have verbally testified of your being a Christian. And for years you have remained unchanged and unconverted and unless you exercise repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ in a saving way, you will die in your sins and drop into hell.

My passage today is from the very lips of the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen friends, there are few who are saved and those who are, are saved with great difficulty. For too many years I have sat and listened to very sincere men in the pulpit proclaim a gospel that made it too easy to become a Christian. They made it far too easy to walk an aisle and come to Christ. I’ve seen people walk an aisle in response to an invitation of, “Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus. Jesus said if you are sincere, you will come to him. Accept him now and I promise you that a public testimony is necessary to show how you are so sincere. So, if you come to him publicly, he will not turn you away.” And thousands have walked that aisle with a silly grin on their face, repeated the Sinner’s Prayer and were able to give the right answer to a couple of questions in an adjoining room and then they were patted on the back and their hands were shook and they were told they were saved and they joined the church, served on its boards and committees, taught Sunday School and sang in the choir and when they died, a great many of them dropped into hell as unconverted church members.

They were victims of an easy-belief gospel, misled by a sincere minister who was ignorant in the ways of saving faith and they accepted a Jesus they knew nothing about and one whom they never truly met. They took the name of Christian but their hearts remained unchanged. A true Christian is a person who has experienced change and there are many today who have been that way for a long time and put on a good front at church and in front of their friends but when they are alone and the devil crooks his finger at them with a temptation, they follow him like a zombie and lie in their sins like a pig lies in his wallow. They drink iniquity like it's water because they have never been wrought upon by the Holy Spirit in conviction and conversion. They are unconverted church members who give the church of Jesus Christ a bad name because of their hypocritical lifestyle. They are hypocrites in the home, hypocrites at the office, hypocrites when they are alone.

They rest upon a false foundation of self-righteousness and good works and are very vocal about their Christianity. Oh, they just can't wait for Jesus to rapture them out of this present evil age. They love the doctrine of the rapture of the church because it assures them they won't have to be found out when Antichrist comes and places a mark upon them to buy and sell for they would surely take that mark and forsake their Christ to save their skins. So, they love to speak of the rapture and talk about it all the time in a selfish way, not caring that the very delay of Christ's return is because he's a long-suffering God, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance and faith.

Here now is the passage from the gospel of Matthew. Listen carefully to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ for they may be an indictment against your brand of Christianity and they may be a means, by the mercy of God, to bring you off your false foundation of security, show you your ruined and lost condition and reveal to you the Son of God in all his glory and power in a saving way. Listen friends, to my solemn warning to you today: there are few who are saved and those with great difficulty.

“13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. 15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 21 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. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. 24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of

mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

Notice friends, that Jesus states the road to hell is broad and there are many on it. The majority of the people on this earth at this hour will live their lives unto themselves and one day get sick and die or be caught out of this world quite unexpectedly and die in their sins and drop into hell.

Let’s look at this majority, the many who are marching on their way to hell. Let’s look first at the many religions in the world who serve a different God than the God of the Bible. Jesus declared that if any man try to go up any other way than Jesus, he is a thief and a robber. Jesus declared, “Verily, verily, I say unto you he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.” That describes all the world religions today. Jesus is the door; he is the only way, friend. Listen, Buddha lived, died and was buried. Confucius lived, died and was buried. Mohammed lived, died and was buried. Jesus lived, died and was buried but he rose again. We serve a risen Lord. Christianity was never built on a coffin-lid. So, we have the many on the broad way of world religions who try to reach heaven some other way other than through Jesus Christ.

Then add to them others who claim to serve the God of the Bible and they gather around the foot of the cross yet they are the ones spoken of in this passage from Matthew who say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and done many wonderful works?” But these, too, are on their way to hell because although they gather around the foot of the cross, they refuse to get up on the cross in submission to the Lord of glory. So, there are few true believers in the world today in comparison with the world population and it’s been that way in every generation since the days of Noah when the flood came upon the earth and destroyed mankind except for eight persons who were placed in the ark of safety.

There are few today, friends, who take refuge in the ark of safety in the person of Jesus Christ who are washed in the blood and born from above. Jesus makes a great distinction between the many and the few. The few are the ones who do the will of the Father. That means those who repent of sin, believe in Christ, live a holy life and who love one another for if we fail to comply with the will of God and disobey his commands, we mock Christ by calling him Lord when he was never truly Lord of our lives. And that is the great issue which is separating us today. It’s the separating line between true believers and false professors. When a person comes savingly to Christ, self is dethroned and another is enthroned there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But many today who are willing to take Christ as their Savior reject him as their Lord and cry out, "We will not have this man reign over us." But the fact remains, a false professor will not submit their neck to his yoke and be under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. You see, today we have made two things out of one: we preachers mislead people by telling them they can have Jesus as Savior now and later on take him as Lord if they want to go deeper with him. In other words, you can still go to heaven and still sit on the throne of your life and rule there in self-gratification.

But Jesus spoke about taking up a cross when you follow him and denying yourself daily. In your day and mine, the vast majority of the pulpits in the land are silent on the issues of the cost of discipleship in becoming a Christian, that there is a cost and it must be counted for, what cost counts and what counts costs. It cost Christ his very blood, friends. Listen, Christ is a Savior to those only to whom he is a Prince and who are willing to obey him. Christ is a risen Lord who sits on a throne and reigns there and if you want him, you must meet him there, friend. He is a sovereign King who will have no rebels in his Kingdom. You come to him one way, friend, and that's by way of a cross where you kneel in surrender and submission to all his claims and rights upon you because you are bought with a price and that price is his blood. He must be a complete Master. Your life is no longer your own.

The greatest failure of the church in America over the last 50 years has been cheapening the gospel and omitting the duty of repentance and submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That is where people drive a stake into the ground and scream, "We will not have this man reign over us. The two things Satan hates more than anything else in a gospel presentation is repentance and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I look at the ministry of a man like Mordechai Ham who preached those two doctrines and he was horse-whipped, pistol-whipped, dragged by a mob to be tarred and feathered and run out of town because he preached the following: Mordechai Ham preached that man is under a curse because of sin and if you die under that curse, you will surely go to hell and the only way of escape from that curse is to repent of your sins and by faith submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That's what that man, Hamm, preached hence he saw 200,000 people come to Christ under his preaching and one of them was Billy Graham.

But the great danger of a false profession is this: you remain unconverted while you sit upon a false and shaky foundation of sand and when trials come and they surely will, when a severe time of testing blows into your life, your Christian profession will break apart on the rocks of adversity. Listen friends, the great dividing line in our passage today is that word "Lord." Jesus is not recognizing those professors who claim they know him and call, "Lord, Lord," when he was never Lord of their life and living in their hearts through the new birth. And at the judgment of all mankind, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, I've taught Sunday School for 20 years. Lord, Lord, I handed out tracts on a regular basis. Lord, Lord, I was a deacon in my church for ten years. Lord, Lord, I was pastor of the church." But Jesus will say unto them, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The church in America is quite unprepared for the coming persecution to it. We will soon be in a day where it is either Caesar is lord or Jesus is Lord. When it comes down to renouncing Christ to stay out of jail or to keep your job or keep your home, then you will find that the church membership in America will thin out immensely. There won't be enough people to pay the bills to continue to operate these big church campuses and many churches will have to close their doors. It will be a phenomenon in America that is kind of like that in Great Britain today where there are empty churches that sit and house cafes and libraries and night clubs.

Let me ask you, friend: is Jesus your Lord? Can you honestly say that when you get up in the morning, that throughout your day he is Lord of your life? Ruling there? Reigning there? Directing you under the discipline of his Holy Spirit? Or are you still sitting on the throne of your life? A true believer has laid down his shotgun of rebellion at the feet of a sovereign King and submits to his yoke upon his neck from that point forward. The typical American Christian is a self-ruling person who sits on the throne of their life like the rich young ruler. They've never counted the cost of following a crucified Savior. They've never surrendered to the Lordship of Christ in their lives with all his claims and rights on them. Like the rich young ruler, they are quite willing to call Jesus "good Master," but quite unwilling to be mastered by him. Yet, if they are not brought off from their false security of self-righteousness, they will soon die and be buried and drop into hell. I repeat: this is the day where a church member sits in the church sanctuary with one foot in the aisle and the other in hell. He claims to know Christ but is not known by Christ.

People often ask me about the subject of revival. It was not long ago in our once great land that the fires of revival were burning here and there. Even in the early 1970s, you could still come across an older pastor who was a teenager back then and his face will light up as he speaks about the power of God in meetings back then. You see, there was a stir in the land for God was afoot. They'll talk about how the presence of God was so strong in prayer meetings to where the teenagers could not wait to get back to church and get into that manifest presence of God.

Would you like to know, friend, what the two main doctrines were that were being preached in those days of revival fires? Repentance and the Lordship of Christ. Go research it yourself if you don't believe me. God was honoring the preaching of the great doctrines of repentance and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. But today, we see no revival fires burning across our land because we preach nice little sermons that don't upset anybody. We've diluted the very gospel that once had power to save and we've insulted the God of the Bible by replacing him with the things of this world in our sanctuaries and we today, experience the withdrawn presence of God rather than the manifest presence of God. God have mercy on us!

It is my prayer that the Lord of glory will raise up a new generation of preachers who do not fear man but fear God and who will preach up the great doctrines of the Bible with clarity and power, preaching man's duty of repentance and surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and proclaim once again, "Ye must be born-again," that regeneration is a

work of God upon the heart that only a sovereign God can perform. Man does not come to Christ on his terms but on God's terms. And I say to you, friend: if you've been sitting in your church with one foot in the aisle and the other in hell, if you know that when you are alone you are quite unchanged because you drink iniquity like it's water, that you rest upon a false foundation, I say to you now: repent, turn from your sins. Beg God for mercy. Ask him by his Holy Spirit to break up your false foundation before it's too late. Submit, friend, submit to the claims of Christ on your life and his Lordship and come to him in surrender of all you have and all you are. Become a seeker of him and ask him for the grace to believe savingly on him. I beg you, 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.

I repeat: there are few saved today and that with great difficulty "Because straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it."