

Doing the Will of the Father  
(Matthew 7:21-23)  
By Randy Wages  
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

Today we will be continuing our study on the Sermon on the Mount so turn again to Matthew, chapter 7. While you turning let me introduce our topic today by posing a few questions. Have you ever attended or observed an awards ceremony (be it sports or academic related, whatever) and felt empathy with those who after devoting so much of their time and energy toward achieving a goal are caught by surprise as they discover that they would not receive the reward they expected but rather it would go to someone else? I often think of those who train so many years for the Olympics and are favored to win the gold but are shocked to discover their performance falls short. Perhaps some of you have tasted a similar type of disappointment at some point in your life's journey. We all experience let-downs and disappointments. But when someone truly dedicates themselves to a task, determines to outwork everyone, to painstakingly prepare to succeed (more so than any of their peers), then the sense of disappointment at not realizing their goal is even greater. They have paid the price they felt was necessary, done their best, yet they come up short. Now that's sad.

Fortunately, we learn much from many of the failures and setbacks we experience in this life and often that experience even sets the stage for future success. You've heard the quotes and clichés that are used to soften such disappointments ó quotes like, "This too shall pass" and "Tomorrow is another day."

But what if there were no second chances? What if there was no tomorrow? What if that which we had worked so hard for and expected to attain (but fell short of) had ramifications that lasted forever? What if the disappointing outcome had consequences that would never go away, that could not be reversed? I'm speaking of eternity and of the possibility of one being totally shocked to discover that they were on what Christ termed the broad road that leads to destruction (spoken of in Matthew 7:13), all the while having assumed they were heaven bound.

Imagine having full confidence that you were going to heaven; only to discover too late that in fact your destination was hell ó eternal banishment from the presence and preserving grace and goodness of God? Now that's more than sad! What could be worse? That should be a sobering thought. And so, this morning I encourage us all to set aside all our temporal worries and care and take nothing for granted as we see what God has to say on this very subject.

In our passage this morning, this is precisely the solemn picture presented by our Lord as He asserts that, not just a few, but òmanyö will die and face the judgment fully expecting to enter heaven's glory only to discover how tragically mistaken they are. Follow with me in your Bible as we look at this description in today's text, Matthew 7:21-23.

There Christ continues saying, ò*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.*<sup>22</sup>*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?*<sup>23</sup>*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Now seeing that òmany,ö such as these described here, shall receive this dreadful sentence from the just Judge of all, it is incumbent upon us to accurately grasp what Christ means as He communicates that the one who enters the kingdom of heaven is ò*he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*” Accordingly, I've titled this morning's message, òDoing the Will of the Father.ö You may recall from last week that I made the connection between today's text with the verses immediately preceding this passage where Christ's warns us to “*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing...*” And then here in today's text, verses 21-23, He describes these who prophesied in His name (prophets of old and as we saw, likened in the scripture to preachers and teachers in our day). And His words reveal that for these of whom He speaks, they will be exposed at the judgment to be false preachers, as He declares, ò*I never knew you...*” I say this to point out again that these false prophets described here, the very ones of whom we are to beware, were sincerely deceived themselves as we learn from today's passage. They thought they were on the narrow way that leads to heaven to use Christ's description back in verse 14. So while some deceivers may be intentional con-artists, that's not the description applied

here. As I said in the message previous to this one, they were sincere ó just sincerely wrong.

So let's look at our scripture text in more detail. I want to begin by examining the description Christ gives of those who shall not enter heaven beginning in verse 22 and then we'll come back to verse 21 later. As we begin, recognize that unlike us, Christ as all-knowing Deity is not subject to being deceived. Here, He is depicted in His future role as the One who shall officiate as the just Judge of all the earth. Notice He begins verse 22 with, *“Many will say to me in that day...”* speaking of the day of final judgment when each person's standing before God shall be declared openly before men and angels. This shall be a joyful day for some but a terrible day for many such as these described here.

And notice that their plea at this judgment begins in verse 22 with the words, *“**Lord, Lord...**”* Now in verse 21 He had said that not everyone that calls Him Lord shall enter the kingdom. Contrast this with I Cor. 12:3 where Paul writes, *“... that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”* This asserts that no man could call Jesus Lord unless it's the Holy Spirit at work. To understand this, we must consider the identity of the Jesus that they call Lord. Is it the Jesus of the Gospel, the one identified in God's word, identified even here in the Sermon on the Mount as the one who came to fulfill the law and the prophets? Or is it a counterfeit?

The first time I heard someone talking about a counterfeit Christ, I dismissed that, knowing there's only one Christ. Well there is only one but this idea of another or counterfeit Jesus is not absurd ó it's scriptural. In Paul's warning of false teachers and preachers in 2 Cor. 11, in verse 4 he says they will come and preach another Jesus and another gospel. The Holy Spirit testifies of Christ as the one sent of the Father, both God and man, who came to establish righteousness for His people and did just that in His life and death on this earth. And in time, to those for whom that righteousness was established and imputed, the Spirit gives them life to look to Christ alone, and see that it is His work of righteousness, made theirs by imputation, is the sole basis of their acceptance before Him. Anyone who calls Jesus Lord apart from God's revelation of this, His person and work, are not doing so by the Holy Ghost. And such is the case of these pictured in today's text. They, the many shall call another Jesus Lord and it is in his name (in the name of another Jesus) that they performed the works which they proceeded to plead before Him.

As we will see in a moment, their plea for consideration based upon their own works exposes that it was another Jesus in whose name they performed these works. In John 10:24-25 we read, ***“Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.”***<sup>25</sup> ***Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.***” You see, you cannot separate what Christ accomplished, His work, from His person. So many imagine that all who call themselves “Christian” are trusting the same Christ for they do refer to the same historical person who lived and died on this earth some 2000 years ago. Yet Christ says it is His works that bear witness of Him. If you misapprehend what He came to do and did accomplish at Calvary, (His works) then that is unbelief in this Jesus whose works bear witness of Him.

Some believe the word “Lord” is repeated here (“Lord, Lord..”) to reflect their sudden sense of danger and the desperation that comes over them. They are met with an agonizing disappointment so they speak here in amazement, as preachers and laborers who fully expected that if any were to be admitted into heaven, they would have to be included in that number. They knew of their own sincere religious zeal and efforts.

Now some will concede that there are many nominal “Christians” who just play at church or make a show of religiosity. And of these they reasonably question whether or not they will actually enter heaven. But that is not the profile here. He is speaking of the preachers of the word, active ministers doing things in the name of Jesus at least as they knew Him to be. And there is not just one or two of them but “many.”

And so their pleas follow as they say “***have we not prophesied in thy name?***” Of course here is where we see the connection back to those of whom we are to beware of false prophets for they speak of prophesying. This would include the prophets of old who were gifted with the ability to foretell things. If you have time later, refresh yourselves with the stories of Balaam and Caiaphas and you will see that even wicked men were given this gift of foretelling as it suited God’s purposes. But as we saw in the previous message, this could also be applied to any who tell forth or who speak or teach others in the capacity of preachers and teachers, associating themselves with the name of Christ.

And then they cite, *“...and in thy name have cast out devils”* As scriptures record, demon possession was common in the times of Christ. And the power to cast out devils was given, not only to the twelve apostles, but to others as well. Consider that Judas, as one of the twelve, was also given this same power. It was also given to the seventy disciples. And this power was also given to some who did not follow Christ and His disciples. In Mark 9:38, John told Christ, *“...Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us:....”* And by the account of Judas alone, we know that this God-given gift was exercised by men who were ultimately exposed as unbelievers. Consider the tragic irony that a man who was able to cast out devils ultimately would be cast to the devil and exposed as one of his (Satan $\delta$ ) servants.

And lastly they plea, *“...and in thy name done many wonderful works?”* This refers to miracles and not just one or two but many. These apparently were granted extraordinary gifts, just as Judas had received. They possibly could speak in various languages or tongues, heal all manner of diseases and sickness, etc. These were gifts from God. We know that Judas had the gift of preaching and was called to that ministry and to be an apostle by Christ Himself. Yet ultimately, it was exposed that he was not one of God $\delta$  elect but like these, a worker of iniquity. He had the power to cast out devils, could perform miracles, do wonders in Christ $\delta$  name and yet, at last he was the one who betrayed Christ. We see here that men, even sincere, well intentioned men, will all find that such pleas and arguments, even if they are as impressive as these cited in our text, will be worthless in the Day of Judgment.

I want to share 2 observations with you pertaining to their arguments for these are very telling. First, notice that these men at the judgment, with their eternal destiny flashing before them, lay their entire hope of salvation upon what they have done in Christ $\delta$  name. And like the Pharisee that thanked God, they credited God also because they were citing the use of gifts that they knew only God could have given them. These things they cite were considered most excellent gifts and were extraordinary in nature. Think of that! They were pleading these works that God had enabled them to do. They did all of this in His name, not their own. So what $\delta$  their problem?

Well, secondly notice what they did not say. There was not one word indicating their reliance on what Christ had done and suffered  $\delta$  only what they had done. In all of their zeal, humility and religious activity, they fail to

plead the only thing (the one thing) that makes all the difference ó Christ Himself ó the mercy and grace of God revealed in Christ, based upon His righteousness being imputed or reckoned to the objects of His mercy. As weøll see in the passage that follows this one, their entire claim to salvation and heavenø's glory was built upon the wrong ground ó a faulty foundation.

Now consider this, if these who were granted miraculous gifts of the ministry that are no longer present today, who were preachers, studying and presumably laboring in øHisø name ó if their argument is declared useless by the judge of all, how silly and arrogant we all were when we dared to imagine that any requirement or condition we could meet would pass muster or make the difference. No, He requires righteousness ó perfect obedience and the extraction of an infinitely valuable payment where the least sin is found. Apart from that, a holy God cannot accept a sinner. And that righteousness only resides in Christ and is made the sinners by Godø's merciful accounting of it to him.

I once imagined that God enabled me to believe on Christ ó enabled me to put my trust in Him as I knew Him to be at the time ó but this passage proves the futility of imagining that anything God in reality enables you to do will contribute towards your acceptance before Him. These folks didnøt imagine God had enabled them ó they really were enabled by God to do the works they cite. So they plea these works in rivalry with (and in opposition to) that which Christ came to do ó even the least of the commandments. Donøt dare approach the judgment imagining that anything other than the merit of what Christ accomplished could commend you unto a holy God. To do so is in rebellion to the doctrine of Christ ó of salvation conditioned on Him alone. And that, their false doctrine (basing their hope of eternal salvation on something other than or in addition to His one righteousness) is the fruit brought forth by the corrupt tree mentioned a few verses back, typifying the false prophets of whom weøre warned to beware.

Well, in verse 23, Christ pronounces His verdict as he says, ø***And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*** Now Christ, as omniscient God, He knew who they were. In fact here we see He knew them to be workers of iniquity ó bringing forth evil fruit out of the evil treasure of their own heart ónot a new heart that had been brought into subjection to this Lord. Psalms 1:6 reads, ø***For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*** I think this is the sense conveyed here when Christ says øI never knew you.ø

He never knew them for their way was not the way of the righteous. What terrifying words to the unsuspecting! It is as if Christ is saying, "I haven't known you with affection reserved for my sheep from everlasting. I never knew you as one for whom, in time, I died, and called by name. I never knew you to seek after me as do my sheep or not after the kingdom of God and His righteousness which I alone established. I never knew you to love me or not the as the one who came and fulfilled the law perfectly on your behalf. I have seen you all about preaching and laboring in my name, but you trust in that which you have done. As a corrupt tree or I never knew you to do one good work in all your life or not with an eye to my glory. I won't hear you, I won't see you, I have nothing to do with you. Depart from me."

He is declaring that he would not admit them into his presence and glory, but commanding them to depart or an eternal death sentence. Here as judge, Christ pronounces their banishment from his presence or and without his restraining hand, his absence is hell itself. It's the place the Bible says is prepared for the devil and his angels. Why? or Because they were "workers of iniquity." They may not be adulterers, murderers, drug addicts, sexual perverts, thieves or any other outwardly profane sinner, but in that they preached (or believed) salvation to be based upon something in addition to Christ and Him crucified, they are justly declared to be workers of iniquity.

Well as Christ has already said, though they are fewer in number, there will be some who enter in the strait gate and the narrow way that leads to eternal life. And as verse 21 tells us, these are those "that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." What is it to do the will of the Father which is in heaven? Notice, that the verse following our text for today, verse 24, begins with a similar description as it begins, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them" or Accordingly, I plan to develop this subject further in my next message, but for now, I just wanted you to first consider what "doing the will of the Father" means in its context.

I believe that one's understanding and teaching on just what is meant here or to do the will of the Father or is an excellent indicator as to whether or not he is deceived by the subtle deception of the wolves in sheep's clothing spoken of back in verse 15. Doing the will of the Father is cited by Christ as an identifying characteristic of those who will enter heaven. So your understanding of what this means will mirror your understanding of all that Christ has been teaching, His sayings or His doctrine or the doctrine of Christ of how acceptance before God and entrance into heaven is gained.

Your understanding of what is meant here by “...*doeth the will of my Father...*” (in this context) reflects your doctrine, your fruit, and thereby exposes it to be from a good tree (true doctrine held by one to whom God has revealed His truth) or a corrupt tree (false doctrine ó trusting in something else), to use Christ’s earlier metaphor of the tree in explaining how we are to distinguish the true from the false.

Many (really most) believe that doing the will of the Father refers to the outward sincere efforts by sinners to keep God’s commandments, in spite of all that Christ has said earlier in this very sermon exposing the utter impossibility that we, as sinners, could measure up to the standard of perfection required for acceptance before this holy God. We need a perfection that He alone is able to accomplish and did accomplish ó a work that He makes clear is one that He, exclusively, would perform.

In the next message, as we look at verse 24 and what is meant by those who “...*heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them...*”, I hope to address some of the more subtle forms which this insistence to look within for the fulfillment of some requirement or condition may take. I will spend more time exposing the nature of the fatal error held by those who misunderstand what this “doing” refers to. But for today’s message, we’ll stay focused more on just what it is to do the will of the Father? Simply put, it is to believe on the Son. This belief is evidenced by having adopted His doctrine ó of seeing that all of salvation is conditioned on Him, with no contribution whatsoever from you the sinner. And it’s to abide in that doctrine ó the doctrine of Christ.

In the immediate context, He had just warned us to beware of false prophets whom we could identify by their fruit ó their doctrine. If we glance down to the end of the Sermon and look at verse 28, it’s recorded there, “*And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:*” So we see the tie-in there which suggests all that Christ had taught ó these sayings ó to declare how salvation was based upon the one righteousness He came to produce (and would produce) ó how this constituted His doctrine ó the doctrine of Christ. Now in the context, seeing that Christ begins verse 24 with, “*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them...*”, it is clear that He is continuing the thoughts expressed up in verse 21, suggesting to us that doing His “sayings” is equivalent to to doing the “will of His Father.” So in essence, He is saying that these who do enter heaven doeth His doctrine.



Now, how do you do doctrine? You believe it. We know this to be the case, but it doesn't merely hinge on the logical deduction I just made from the immediate context. Let's consider the very best commentary on scripture or other scriptures. Be turning to John chapter 6. While you're turning, let me mention that last week, Mark Pannell brought an outstanding message from Romans 6 that I would encourage you all to listen to if you haven't already. And there in Romans 6:17-18, we have recorded, ***“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. <sup>18</sup>Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”*** See scripture speaks of obeying doctrine as an act (a doing) by those who have been made servants of righteousness.

Now over in John 6 let's read more of the scripture's commentary on itself. Look with me now down at verse 28. It reads, ***“Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? <sup>29</sup>Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”*** Not believe on just anyone, but this one sent of the Father for a specific purpose or to accomplish salvation for His people or to be the end or fulfillment of all God required to be reconciled to His people.

Stay with me in John 6 and look down at verse 39: There Christ says, ***“And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. <sup>40</sup>And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, (for whom that beam has been graciously removed from the eye of their understanding) and believeth on him, (Him or not one who simply makes salvation possible but one who accomplished it) *may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.**** Again, we see the Father's will vitally connected with believing on Christ or trusting Him for all of salvation, based on His works, not works done by us nor works He enables us to perform. No, He gets all the glory.

And then in the next chapter, John 7, verse 16, we read, ***“Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. <sup>17</sup>If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”*** Again, we see that doing His will is connected to knowing the doctrine or it is to trust solely in the doing and dying of this precious Savior sent by the Father or the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

It's clear that many shall be surprised at the judgment if they approach God based on something other than or in addition to that which Christ came to accomplish and did accomplish at Calvary. It was all His doing and dying, not ours. We do the Father's will when we rest there in Christ, based upon His work having been reckoned to our account, having repented of ever imagining that something done by us (even something that God enabled us to do) might accomplish that which took nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness!

We all enjoy varying degrees of success in this life, but everyone's life journey is also met with disappointing surprises along the way. And we're glad that there's always been a tomorrow. But friends, that's not the case at this final declarative judgment of which Christ speaks. I don't want to be surprised there and I'm sure you don't either. So take heed of God's way of salvation and reject that way which naturally seems so right to us as fallen sinners ó that most popular way wherein we imagine salvation to be conditioned in some way or to some degree on something that proceeds from us. To östay the courseö on the road upon which we all initially begin our religious journey is to ultimately be found in the company of these who hear the most dreaded words of Christ, *"I never knew you...depart from me..."*

In Hebrews 9:27-28 it reads, ***"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: <sup>28</sup>So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."*** Those sins which Christ had no part in producing, but which were imputed to His account ó He put them away completely. The debt is paid. And when He returns again, those sins will not present ó they're gone, non-existent before God's judicial bar of justice. Their iniquities are not charged to them for whom He died, for they were charged to their Substitute. So look to Him who by His one offering justified for ever all those for whom He lived and died. It's a done deal. So, trust in Him alone, based upon the righteousness He accomplished. That's doing the will of the Father.

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself ó the Bible.

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