

I Never Knew You

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Matthew 7:21-23

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Now, let's read our text again, if you will, from Matthew seven.

Now, remembering, while I read this that this is not some radical, narrow-minded, sectarian preacher talking. This is the Lord of glory. This is the one who knows men's hearts and their professions. This is our Lord and Savior. This is the one of the whom the Father said, "This is my beloved Son, hear him, hear him."

In Matthew 7:21 the master said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord." He is saying that not everyone that professes to be a Christian, not everyone that professes to be saved, "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

What is the will of God? "This is the will of God that you believe on him whom God hath sent."

They said to Christ one day, "What shall we do to work the works of God?"

He said, "These are the works of God that you believe on him whom God has sent."

And he said in verse 22: "Many." And there is the word that sends cold chills up and down my spine. "Many, many." A moment ago he had just said, "The way of life is narrow and straight and few there be that find it." Again, he said, "Many are called, but few are chosen." And here he uses the word "many," a vast number. "Many will say to me in that day, in that great day, in the day of judgment many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, have we not preached, prophesied, taught in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful religious works?' And then will I profess unto them, then will I..." The final voice, the only voice, the Judge of all the universe. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." "Then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you. I never knew you. Depart from me, you that work iniquity.'"

Now, this passage of Scripture is, to me, one of the most solemn, sobering, frightening Scriptures in all the Word of God. I see here the picture that our Lord has drawn. It is in that last day. It is the day of judgment. The sea has given up the dead which were in it. Death and hell hath delivered up the dead in them. All men, small and great, rich and

poor, nations stand before God. And these people make one last appeal, one last stand and they begin to talk about all that they did on earth in the name of Christ, all that they gave and all that they did and all that they served. And then at the end of that plea our Lord just looks upon the many and says to them, "I never knew you."

And we're not talking, here, about rabble and profane and harlots and drunkards and the people of the gutter. This is not the people he is talking about here. The people assembled here are not the war mongers and the greedy. The people he is talking about here are preachers and elders and deacons and church members and choir members and soul winners and missionaries and community leaders. That's exactly what he said. These are people who profess to know Christ. These are people who professed salvation.

They said, "Lord, we preached in your name. We did many wonderful works in your name and we cast out devils in your name."

These are so-called good, moral, Bible readers who hear the Lord of glory say to them, "I never knew you. I never knew you. The Church knew you. The Church knew you and recognized you and put your name on their books. And the world knew you and recognized you and called you reverend or doctor or rabbi or bishop or missionary. The people of the neighborhood knew you and all proclaimed your name. But I never knew you. I never knew you."

He didn't say, "I once knew you, but I don't own you now." He said, "I never knew you. I never knew you. That is yonder in the council halls of eternity when I chose my people."

And the Scripture says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation."

Paul, writing to the Church at Thessalonica, he said, "Brethren, beloved of the Lord, I thank God for you because God set his love upon you from eternity. God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

And Christ said, "Back here when I made up my jewels, when I made up my flock, when I made up my sheep and my people I never knew you. I never knew you. And when I walked on this earth incarnate in human flesh, when I came down here as the representative of my people...In Adam all died. In Christ we're made alive. By one man sin and death entered this world and judgment. By one man's disobedience we were made sinners. By one man's obedience we were made righteous. When I walked this earth in the flesh and was tried and tempted in all points yet without sin working out a perfect righteousness, fulfilling all righteousness, imputing to my people a holiness so that they might stand before the Father in me. I never knew you. I never knew you. And when I went to Gethsemane's garden and prayed that high priestly prayer: 'Father I pray for them. I pray for them. Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given to me that they may be one even as we are one. I have given them thy Word and they have received thy Word, those that thou gavest me. I pray not for the world. I pray for them

which thou hast given me.’ When I uttered that prayer, that high priestly prayer in the garden of Gethsemane I never knew you. And when I went to the cross of Calvary and there was wounded for somebody’s transgressions and was bruised for somebody’s iniquities and the chastisement of somebody’s peace was laid upon me and through my stripes they shall be healed, I never knew you. And when I ascended to glory and took the precious blood and put it on the mercy seat of glory, that glorious atonement, and I bore in my breastplate and on my hands the names of my people, I never knew you. I never knew you. And when I sat down on the right hand of God as the forerunner, entering into glory and possessing it for his own and interceded for my own and was an advocate and a mediator for my own, I never knew you.”

That’s what he said. He’s not saying, “I once knew you. We once had some fellowship. We once had a relationship.” He is saying to these religious people, these preachers and missionaries and deacons and choir leaders and singers and all these folk, “I never...I never knew you. I never knew you. Depart from me. Depart.”

Oh, how final are these words.

“But, Lord, we preached and, Lord, we did many wonderful works. And, Lord, we were numbered among the people. And, Lord, we cast out devils. And, Lord, we tithed. And, Lord, we attended services and we made professions of faith.”

“I never knew you. Never. Depart from me. Depart from me.” What a terrible sentence: “Depart from me.” What a terrible separation: “Depart from me.” The only light, “Depart into everlasting darkness.” The only source of love into everlasting hate, “Depart from me.” The only way into eternal glory, “Depart from me.” The only physician, “Depart from me into the eternal pain.” The only join, “Depart from me, from my friendship, from my grace, from my fellowship, from my paradise, from my presence, from my heaven. Depart from me.”

I’ll tell you, if the thought of that is so terrible—and I sat and looked at that Scripture. I’ve been looking at it for days asking God to give me a message—if the thought of it is so terrible, if just the thought of it... “I never knew you. I never knew you.” In that day, the last day, the day of judgment, “I never knew you. I never knew you. Depart from me.” If the thought of it is so terrible, my friend, what will it be like to experience it? What will it be like to pastor a church and come into the pulpit every Sunday and open the Bible and lead the singing and then to die and the people say all those nice things about you and they put flowers all over your casket and give you a good send off, you know, and then to stand there at the great day of judgment and hear the master say, “The world knew you and the Church knew you and the advertisement page in the *Daily Independent* knew you and people around the world knew you, but I never knew you? I never knew you.”

What would it be like to play these instruments every Sunday or to stand here, Mike, and lead the singing or to sing these specials as a quartet and a trio or back there, Cecil, teach a class and you’re so highly esteemed and well thought of and held in the utmost, highest

character and reputation and people say, “Oh, I like to hear him teach, I like to hear him read the Bible, I like to hear him sing.” And then you die and everybody says good things about you and puts your name on the pew and your name in the bulletin and all these things, send telegrams from everywhere and then come and stand before Christ say, “Lord, I taught Sunday school class and I sang and preached.”

“I never knew you. I never knew you.”

“Lord, I gave offerings. You know, I tithed and I helped support the church. I helped support the preaching, kept him out...”

“I never knew you.”

That’s what we’re talking about here. “Depart from me forever, forever. You won’t sing anymore. You won’t teach anymore. You won’t read any more Scripture. You won’t argue doctrine anymore. You won’t sing any more songs, no more sermons, no more services, no more opportunities. Just leave here. Leave here. Leave here. I never knew you. I never knew you.”

I read a story this week. I was reading that...I told you this morning, that book talking about why hymns were written. I don’t remember the name of this one. I was reading through a lot of them and it told about two young men. Their names were John and Charles. And they went west before the turn of the century back in 1880 and 90, somewhere way back there, with a railroad crew, one of these rough and ready and profane and wicked and careless railroad crews. They put the railroad through the west, John and Charles.

And they was out there working. They were wicked, careless sinners. And one day they were out on the job and a piece of heavy equipment fell on Charles and it just mashed him, it just...oh, from the...from his chest down it just mashed the life out of him. But he was still living and they got thing off of him and got him up somehow in an old homemade stretcher and took him in one of the tents over here and laid him down and somewhere they found a doctor or a corpsman or somebody, you know, who knew something about medicine. And he came in and pulled a blanket down and looked at him and he said, “I can’t do anything for you, son. You’re just not going to make it. The life has been mashed clear out of you and I can’t help you.”

And he is lying there in pain and lying there in agony, lying there dying and he called his buddy and he said to him, “John.” And come came over there and stood by him and he took John by the hand. He said, “John, pray for me. Pray for me.”

And John looked down. He said, “Charles, I never prayed in my life. I don’t know how to pray. I never said a prayer in my life. I don’t know how to pray.

“Well,” he said, “John,” he said, “Sing a religious song, John. Just sing a religious song. I need to hear something. Just sing a religious song.”

And John said, “Charlie, I...the songs I know I couldn’t sing now. I don’t know any religious songs. Charlie, I don’t know any religious song.”

“Well,” he said, “John, get a Bible and read some Bible. Just get a Bible and read some Scripture. And they began to scurry around. They went, the writer said, in every tent in that camp and they looked everywhere and they couldn’t turn up a Bible or a Testament anywhere.

And John came back and he said, “Charles,” he said, “We ain’t got no Bible and nobody here knows any Bible.”

And the writer said that young man turned his face to the wall and he cried and he cried and he sighed, “Oh, my poor lost soul. My poor lost soul. I’m going out to meet God without a prayer, without a song, without a verse of Scripture.” And he died.

And that’s what we’re talking about here. Our Lord says to these people in that great day, “Depart from me where there are no prayers, where there are no songs and where there is no Scripture. Depart from me.”

I’ll tell you what an awful, awful thing to think about.

Turn to Isaiah 28. We’ve got a similar experience right here in Isaiah 28. If you don’t mind looking over there a minute. And what I’m saying is this. And I want to impress this upon you. I believe the greatest mission field in the world today is our churches. I think through our Hollywood, high pressure evangelism that we have filled our church rolls and our church pews with people who have made professions of religion and they are trying to live the Christian life without Christ. They are trying to serve God not knowing God and they are resting on a profession that they made 20, 30, 40 years ago to get them to Heaven. The reality of Christ is not in their heart. And the reality of Christ is not in their soul and the presence of Christ is not with...they do not know him. They know about him and they know a few verses of Scripture. And they made a profession of religion, but the life of Christ and the life of joy and the life of peace and the life of the Son of God they do not know.

I stood there and listened to that pastor’s wife last Thursday night in Fayetteville, North Carolina tell the people that all her life she had lived a false religious profession and just now come to know Christ. And I called her this afternoon to talk with her and the pastor and she said to me over the phone, she said, “How glorious it is to know Christ. How glorious it is to be delivered from the bondage of a religious profession into the glorious liberty of the Son of God.” And she said, “I was sitting in church this morning and a lady was sitting beside me, a friend of mine.”

And the friend told her last Thursday. She said, “I’m lost, too. I’ve been to church all my life and I don’t know Christ.”

And her friend turned to her this morning while the pastor was preaching and her friend said, "This is the first time I've ever heard the gospel." Isn't that what she said, Doris? "The first time I ever heard." She said, "My ears have heard words and I have heard many preachers." But she said to her, "Betty, for the first time in my life I'm hearing something. I'm hearing something. I'm hearing something."

Have you ever heard? Our Lord said, "They've got eyes, but they don't see." They don't see the glory of Christ, the power and wisdom of God in Christ. They don't see the atonement in Christ. They don't see Christ as the effectual, sufficient, sin offering. They don't see that. He said, "They've got eyes, but they don't see." They can see the ceremony. They can see the candles burning. They can see the stained glass windows. They can see all the impressive religious relics. They can see the processional. They can see the preacher in his silly looking uniforms of religion. They can see all these things. They can see everybody, the choir in their uniforms and see the little cherubs in their little white blouses. You know, they can see all these pretty religious things, but they can't see substitution. They can't see the blood redemption. They can't see deliverance by a crucified Christ. They've never seen it.

And they can hear. What do they hear? They hear words. They hear words. But they don't hear Christ. They hear the choir singing. They hear the quartets. "Say, that's a pretty good quartet."

"Did you hear the words of the song?"

"No, I didn't hear the words of the song, but I heard the voices. And I can hear the organ playing and I can hear the preacher's pleasant voice and I can hear...but I've never heard him speak who speaks through his word. He has never spoken to me."

"They've got hearts," he said, "but they don't understand."

And look at Isaiah 28 just a moment. I won't keep you long, here, but listen to it. It says in verse 14 of Isaiah 28: "Wherefore hear the Word of the Lord, hear the Word of the Lord, ye scornful men, you rebellious men that rule the people in Jerusalem."

Do you know who that is? That's the religious leaders. That's the high ecclesiastical leaders. That's the people that spoke for God. They rule the people in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the holy city, the capital of religion, the center of ceremonialism. These people were rulers in the feast days and the ceremonies and the rituals and the laws and the transcription of the Word of God. They were rulers because you said, "We've made a covenant with death."

I wish I had a dollar for every time I've heard somebody say, "Well, I'm not afraid to die. I'm not afraid to die."

That's what these people said. "We're not afraid to die."

And with hell are we at agreement. Yes, we agree there is a heaven. We agree there is a hell, but we're not going there. How many times I've heard people say, "It's all right with me. I'm not worried. I am as confident of heaven as if I was already there."

And they said when the overflowing scourge, this is the flood of God's judgment. This passes through and sweeps away everything in its path. "It won't come nigh me. I made my profession when I was 10 years old. I joined the church. I have been a faithful member. I have been a deacon. I have been an officer. I have done all these things. I am not afraid to die. I'm not worried about hell and I'm not worried about the judgment."

And that is the very people that stood before Christ and said, "We did this. We did that. We did the other."

And he said, "I never knew you. I never knew you."

We got a refuge. God says it is a refuge of lies. We've got a hiding place. We are well hid. We've got a storm shelter.

I'll tell you what. It will protect you from suspicion by men, but it will not protect you from a full revelation by God, full exposure. He said it is a refuge of lies and it is falsehood.

You say, "Well, what are we going to do?"

Look at verse 16. He tells you. He said, "Therefore thus saith the Lord, God."

Now, here's what you've said. You've said, "We're not afraid to die." You've said, "We're not afraid of hell." You've said, "When judgment comes it won't touch us. That's what you've said. That's what you've said. "We've got a refuge. We've got a profession. We've got an experience. We've got a feeling. We've got assurance by our pastor." That's what you said.

Now God speaks. He said, "This is what I say: 'Behold, I lay in Zion.'" Zion is the Church. Zion is the heavenly kingdom. "I lay in Zion for a foundation." Here is where you better build, "A stone." That's a rock. That rock is Christ. That rock is Christ. "I lay a foundation." And that's a rock. It's a rock. It's a stone. It's Christ. And a stone for its ageless existence, eternal stone, a stone for durability, a stone for strength. I lay a stone and it's a tried stone. It is tried by God yet with out sin. It is tried by the devil. He took him up on a mountain. He said, "Make these stones bread. Cast yourself off. Fall down and worship me." Tried by Satan under the worst circumstances. Tried by men. It's a tried stone. Tried by the Old Testament saints. Tried by people of God. Tried by martyrs. A tried stone.

And he is a precious cornerstone. He is precious to the Father. He is precious to the believer. He is precious to the angels. He is the precious cornerstone and he is a sure foundation, a sure foundation, a certain foundation, a foundation that will not crumble.

That's Christ. He that believeth shall not make haste. He that believeth shall not be ashamed.

My friends, go back to the text of Matthew seven. Let us look at everything in this life. I wish, tonight, that all of us—this preacher, you, everybody here—that we would look at everything in life considering how it will appear in this hour.

“Many will say unto me in that day, in that...” That's the day. Really, this day is not real important. How will everything appear in the day of death, in the day of judgment, in the day of resurrection, the material thing?

It doesn't matter whether I am rich or poor. It doesn't really matter in this life, does it? It matters whether I know Christ. It really doesn't matter. We've put a lot of stock in education and I think a fellow ought to get all of it he can. Learn something. Don't be dumb if you can help it. But education or lack of it, what difference does it make? I'd rather be dumb and go to heaven than smart and go to hell, I'll tell you that.

What difference does it make health or sickness? Everybody wants good health. Everybody wants good health. Everybody is going to take their vitamins, you know, and eat right and sleep right and out there jogging and running around trying to...

You think you're going to live forever? You're going to live about 70 years and then you're going to die. And I'll guarantee you're going to get old just like everybody else. You're going to get sick just like everybody else and they're going to dig a hole and put you in it just like everybody else. You'll be a healthy corpse or a sick corpse. It doesn't make any difference. You're going to be a corpse. What difference does it make?

Somebody says, “Well, I've been successful.”

I'd rather be a failure and stand in God's presence with Christ than successful and perish with the damned.

“Well, I got friends. You've got no friends.”

Well, I got one friend. “And he sticketh closer than a brother.” And he is the friend I want in that day. I don't need to court the high muckety-mucks of this world and the rich of this world and the influential of this world.

Somebody says, “Well, I can name among my friends so-and-so.” Can you name him among your friends? That's the name that is above every name. That is the name that matters. Does he know your name? That's the difference.

If you just wave at family ties. It doesn't matter whether you are married or single. It doesn't matter whether you've got children or don't have children. It doesn't matter whether you've got relatives.

“Well, I just got no family.”

You’ve got the biggest family in the universe if you know Christ. That’s the family. That’s God’s family. You’ve got family everywhere. But, my friend, especially, my religious profession.

Most everybody here has some kind of religious profession, some kind of belief, some kind of hope. Now, let me just...let’s examine that profession in the light of that day, of that day. What is your profession?

Look at these people just a moment. Let’s see something about their profession. See what they had to say. Now, they said here, “Many,” verse 22, “will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not preached in your name? In your name cast out devils? In your name done many wonderful works?’ Then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you.’”

Now, let...these people had a religious profession. Number one, they made an open profession. They said, “Lord, Lord.” They made an open profession. They even preached in the name of Christ.

Secondly, they undertook Christian service. They did many, many...it says “many,” many wonderful works, wonderful works. They had some success. He said, “We did cast out devils. We did do many wonderful works. We did preach.” They had some success. They did these things.

And they were evidently recognized by other people because they said they were wonderful works. People bragged on them. “People gave us a credit for what we did and we were quit orthodox, too. We did it...”

Did you notice three times they said, “In thy name?” Do you see that? “Lord, we did this in your name, in your name, in your name.” Three times these orthodox people said they did what they did in Christ’s name.

All right. Here’s the next thing I notice about it. They had a religious profession. They did. Secondly, they kept it up a long time. They were not silenced by men. Nobody detected that they didn’t know Christ. Nobody detected it. Even they didn’t detect it. They were not openly disowned by the Lord in this life. It was the judgment when he said, “I never knew you.” It wasn’t in this life. They never did get any message from heaven in this life that Christ didn’t know them. At the judgment when he said, “I never knew you.” They were not openly disowned. They were not left without results. They had results. And they, listen, they expected to enter heaven. Yes, sir, they did. They held on to their profession. They held on to their experience. They held on to their works. They held on to their assurance even to the judgment and he said, “Even in that day they’ll say to me, they will say it to me, ‘Lord, we did this. We did this.’” They kept their profession and their claim to religion clear to the judgment.

But notice this, thirdly. They were fatally mistaken and they found it out in a terrible

way. What a way...you know, wouldn't it be...wouldn't it be marvelous, wouldn't it be glorious, wouldn't it be a blessing from heaven itself if God would be pleased...

You know, a lot of times we go to hear a preacher and he preaches along this line: "Examine yourself whether you be in the faith. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." When you come to the Lord's Table, "Examine yourself whether you discern the broken body and shed blood of Christ. Examine your heart. Do you know Christ? Do you love Christ? Are you resting on Christ? Are you in Christ?"

And we get all upset and say, "I tell you, that fellow just acts like we're all lost. He doesn't...he doesn't...I just don't like to hear him preach. He's too personal. He just examines people all the time. He talks about examining himself and us examining..."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you found out before the judgment that you didn't know Christ? Now wouldn't that be wonderful? What if you found it out tonight? What if, after all these years of you said, "Boy, I'd hate to admit it before my friends that I've been wrong, I've had a false profession? I'd sure hate to admit..."

I'd rather admit it before them than have God tell me that in the judgment.

"Why, I'd be too embarrassed. Why, preacher, to come down in front of that church and say, 'folks, I've just had a false claim to glory. I've had a false profession. I just haven't really known Christ all these years and I need Christ. Pray for me.' I just couldn't do it. I'd be embarrassed."

"Oh, he that believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

These people found it out too late, too late. They stood there in front of the master and they began to turn out, "Now, Lord, we did these things."

"But I never knew you. I never knew you."

Now, here is the last thing. Let me give you this. You see, they attended to works. They attended to marvels. But they forget essentials. Here is the key to this whole thing. They said, "Lord, we preached and we cast out devils and we did many wonderful works and we did this, that and the other thing." They never one time said, "Lord, you died for me. You bore my sins on Calvary. You are my confidence and my hope and my trust." Not one time. They kept saying what they had done, what they had given and what they had accomplished for him. They never said anything about what he did for them.

Turn to Philippians chapter three. Now, this was the experience the apostle Paul had in Philippians the third chapter. Turn over there just a moment, Philippians chapter three. And I tell you, friends, this is just...it's rare for a person to grow up to adulthood without making some kind of religious profession. Unfortunately, that is so. I remember one time when a man came down the aisle here and said the Lord had saved him. And he was about, oh, 20 some odd eight or nine...somewhere in there.

And I said, “Well, are you a church member?”

He said, “Oh, no.”

I said, “You’ve never been a church member?”

“No.”

I said, “Have you ever made a profession of faith?”

“No.”

“You never did make a profession of faith?”

“Nope.”

I said, “How did you miss it? How did you grow up through all these soul winners and professional preachers and all these dragnet folks and miss making some kind of religious profession?”

And he said, “I don’t know. But I just never have made one.”

Everybody here has made one. I made one when I was nine years old, nine years old. I didn’t know the gospel from a hole in the ground. I learned it in 1950 after I had gone to school and pastored a church three years. I learned the gospel. I’m glad I learned it. I’m glad I learned it.

And that’s the experience the apostle Paul had, Saul of Tarsus. Listen to him. He said in verse four, “Thou I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any of you think you have whereof you might trust in the flesh, I more, more than you. You’ve got something to trust. I joined the church. I’m a Baptist. My brother is a preacher, all this sort of thing, you know. We built great...” You got something to boast about? Listen to this.

Verse five: “I was circumcised the eight day of the stock of Israel. I came from Abraham. I came from the tribe of Benjamin, the beloved tribe.” He said, “My momma was a Hebrew and my daddy was a Hebrew. I’m a Hebrew of Hebrews.” He said, “As touching the law, I climbed as high as you can climb. I was a Pharisee.”

The only thing over him was the high priest. Isn’t that about right? He was a Pharisee. If Paul had lived today he would have been president of somebody’s convention. If he would have been Catholic he would have been the pope. Exactly right. He climbed as high as you could climb.

“Concerning zeal,” well, he said, “I fought for what I believe. I persecuted the church.” Are you a good strong Baptist that fights for your doctrine or a Methodist and fights for your doctrine or a Catholic and fights for your doctrine? Paul killed for what he believed.

“Touching the righteousness which is in the law... Bring me the 10 Commandments,” he said. “I’ll show you I’ve kept every one of them.”

That’s the way he felt, wasn’t it, Joe?

Blameless! Look at verse seven. “But what things were gain to me,” and they were to him at one time, his religious denomination, his heritage, his ancestry, his religious accomplishments. He didn’t miss a day in Sunday school for 20 years. He had a string of pins all the way down to his waist. He read his daily Bible readings. He did all these things that are prescribed. He dedicated and rededicated and all these things.

Well, “What things were gain I counted loss, total loss, a wipe out for Christ. Yeah, doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all these things and I count them but dung, rubbish, garbage that I may win Christ and be found in him.”

That is where God will bring you if he saves you. He’ll bring you the place you’ll take all your ancestry, all of your heritage, all of your little doings and professions, all of your giving and going, all of these things and he’ll let you pile it up in one big pile and put it in the garbage can as so much garbage that you might win Christ and be found in him.

“Not having my own experience, not having my own profession, not having my own righteousness, not having my own religion, but having the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith. Oh that I may know him.”

That is what I am talking about. These folks over here stand in the judgment. And I hear people giving the same answer today.

“Are you saved?”

“Yes, sir. I was converted back when I was 12. I made a profession of faith. Oh, I haven’t always been true to the Word, but I’ve got my profession.”

A lady wrote me the other day from the television audience. She said, “All my children have been saved a long time ago. Only one out of the six is living for God, but they are all saved. They are all saved.”

“I never knew you.”

I don’t know how to read it with the solemnity and the profound reverence that it ought to carry, but I’ll tell you, I tremble, I tremble to think that we’ll go through these motions and this...and all these things that we do and then someday stand before him too late and

hear him say in response to our pleas, in response to our defense. We set up the best defense we can. "I did this and that and the other thing," orthodox.

"I never knew you. I never knew you. Depart from me."

You say, "Can a man know Christ?"

I believe he can. I believe he can. I believe a man can know Christ. And you won't find him down here. Salvation is not down here. It's not in a bench, it's not in my hands. My hands have no nail prints. I can't shake your hand and send you to glory. But I'll tell you: Life is in Christ. And if you can go home tonight and you can fall on your face...get alone...that's...I tell people that. Don't go talk to anybody. Don't come talk to me or anybody else. I've told you all I know. Salvation is in Christ. Salvation is for sinners. God loves to show mercy. He delights to show mercy. Nobody ever, all the way through the New Testament, people who were weak and weary and laboring and heavy laden and thirsty and hungry and hopeless and helpless cried for mercy and he saved them. But all the way through the New Testament he turned his back on the religious, the self-righteous, the religious leaders. He turned his back on them. He said, "Leave them alone." But these, these sinners, he saved them.

So if you can go home and you can, before God, get alone in your den or closet or somewhere, a bedroom and open the Word of God and say, "Lord, I don't want to miss salvation. I don't want to miss Christ. I'm not so proud I'll defend a religious tradition all the way to judgment. I'm not so proud I'll defend a religious profession all the way to the judgment. I'm not so proud that I'm going to defend my good works all the way to the judgment. I don't want to miss Christ. Now, I'm calling on you. Be merciful to me, a sinner. I'm looking to Christ. I'm trusting his blood and his blood only. I want to be saved. I want some assurance that I'm saved. I want to be in Christ whatever it costs, whatever it costs. I want to be in Christ. I want to know Christ. Reveal him to my heart. Give me saving faith in the Son of God. Give me a love for the Word. Lord, give me a love for you. Give me a love for your people. Do for me what I have never been able to do for myself, what the Church can't do for me or the preacher or anybody else. Save me. Give me grace."

Can you do that? You have not because you ask not. I read it a while ago, "Ask and it shall be given. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened."

But don't knock on my door. Knock on his door.

That old thief. He couldn't work. He was nailed to a cross. He couldn't wash. He couldn't be baptized. He was nailed to a cross. He couldn't work. He couldn't wash. He couldn't witness and he couldn't wait. And he caught along Christ.

And our Lord said, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

And I challenge you. I know most of us are going to go right on down the same road we've been going down. "Baptist, Baptist. Here is my belief and I'll just tell you why momma and daddy were Baptists and I'll be a Baptist till I die."

Yeah, and you'll die, too. And you'll stand before God and hear him say, "I never knew you."

But Christian, Christian is my name. That's what I want to be, Christ. Don't you? And I'm not too proud to call on him. And I hope you're not. I hope you don't ignore what I've tried to say tonight because God's saving sinners. God is calling on sinners. God is blessing sinners. And anybody here will take your place as a sinner and call on Christ. He'll save you.

No matter what you got to do I just know...I know where you are. I've been there. You're just proud, you know.

"Well, that's your opinion."

No, that's his opinion. That ain't my opinion. I just know that you've got a life to live and a death to die and a God to face and eternity to spend. And, according to this Bible there is one way of salvation, that's Jesus Christ. There is one way of cleansing, that's the blood. There is one way to the glory of God and that is by faith. And you miss that you will perish. That's all I know to tell you.

Religion won't do it. There are going to be people from every religious denomination in this world perishing some day and no need to, no need to.

Our gracious merciful Lord, because you are merciful and because you are gracious you died for us on the cross and you gave your life that we may live. You bore our hell that we might have heaven. You bore our sins that we might have holiness. You bore our guilt that we might be cleansed. That's my hope. That's my hope. Not in the preaching we've done or the singing or the giving or...there is nothing about us that is good. Even our righteousness is as filthy rags. We all do fade as a leaf. We are all an unclean thing. In our flesh dwelleth no good thing. In the flesh we don't even hope to please you. But, living God, Christ pleased you. And Christ satisfied your law and Christ satisfied your justice and honored and exalted every attribute of the living God and this is my hope and this is my plea when Christ died on that cross he died for me. I know no other ransom, I know no other foundation, I know no other name on which to call and no other name that I can plead. May it please thee to reveal Christ to every heart?

Lord, don't let us perish under the very gospel that can save us. Don't let us, in our pride and prejudice and bigotry and sectarianism go to hell defending a false profession when we can very easily call on thy name. I call on thee and I call on you for those that won't call on you. And like Job of old I sacrifice before you for children that won't. And I ask you, Lord, to forgive them and reveal yourself to their hearts for the glory of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.