

Christ's Prophecy Regarding the Last Day

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Psalter 20

Scripture: Matthew 7:13–29

Psalter 265

Sermon Text: Matthew 7:21–23

Psalter 206:2, 3, 5

Psalter 384:1, 2, 4, 5

Boys and girls, have you ever looked at an x-ray? Perhaps at some point in your life, you broke an arm or a leg, and the doctor showed you on the x-ray what you cannot see with your naked eye, providing evidence that your arm or leg was indeed broken. How very thankful we ought to be for technology that enables us to see beneath the skin so that physicians can diagnose and treat our illnesses!

When it comes to the state of our soul, however, there is no technology that can expose what really transpires in the heart of a man. Only One knows perfectly what lives in our hearts. To Him all things are open and naked, and He knows the inner recesses of our hearts—and thus the true state of our hearts. Simply stated, this means that when God looks upon us, He is always looking at a spiritual x-ray of our lives. He always x-rays our existence. He x-rays our heart, our motives, and our deeds.

Beloved congregation, what would a spiritual x-ray of our hearts reveal? You will recognize that this is a very important question for all of us, for a day is coming when our hearts will be judged by the Judge of all the earth. And when that day arrives, our religion must be genuine!

This truth prompted the Lord Jesus Christ to conclude one of the most remarkable sermons ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount, with an urgent, powerful, four-fold call to self-examination. With God's help, we want to consider one of these calls to self-examination. Our text for this occasion can therefore be found in 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 have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

This passage speaks to us of Christ's prophecy regarding the Last Day, the Day of Judgment. We will make the following observations:

First, we find in this passage a solemn assessment: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Second, it contains an urgent but futile plea: “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?”

And, third, there is an irreversible pronouncement: “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

1. A Solemn Assessment

It is remarkable that Christ puts so much emphasis on self-examination at the conclusion of this sermon. We could argue that He even begins His sermon that way by formulating the well-known and heart-searching Beatitudes. These Beatitudes define who the citizens of His kingdom are. This is fitting when considering that the Sermon on the Mount is often referred to as the constitution of the spiritual kingdom of Christ.

Christ thus begins that sermon by telling us who the blessed ones are: they are the poor in spirit, who know

their spiritual poverty and spiritual bankruptcy, who begin to see themselves as God sees them. A pronouncement follows that they who mourn are blessed. They mourn over their spiritual poverty and thus over their sin. They grieve over it and are as mournful as someone who mourns the death of a loved one. Christ then declares, “Blessed are the meek”—that is, those who know their proper place of humble submission before God.

Christ is therefore saying that they are blessed who see themselves as God sees them, and who, as poor, needy, bankrupt sinners, hunger and thirst after Christ and His perfect righteousness—merited by His perfect life and perfect sacrifice—and who cannot be satisfied without Him and what He has accomplished.

Christ then proceeds to describe the external fruits of internal grace by saying, “Blessed are the merciful and the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Blessed are the peacemakers, “for they shall be called the children of God.” He concludes the Beatitudes by saying that they are blessed whose walk is such that the world will react in hostility and persecute them for righteousness’ sake. Christ, the Living Word and the Author of the written Word, has given us a perfect portrait of the citizens of His kingdom in this description.

Subsequently, He begins to unfold a variety of themes in the sermon proper and then ends it with a striking conclusion, calling all who hear His Word to engage in serious self-examination. He does so by first of all telling us that there is a broad as well as a narrow way, and that everyone is traveling on one of the two. We are either on the narrow way that leads to eternal life, or we are on the broad way traversed by so many—a way that inevitably will lead to everlasting perdition.

Christ follows this conclusion with the analogy of a tree—an analogy to which we can all relate. We all understand that a tree with apples on it cannot be a pear tree. It is an apple tree by virtue of its fruits. After this analogy,

we arrive at our text, which is followed by the Lord Jesus' concluding parable of the wise and foolish builders.

What are we to learn from the fact that Christ, the greatest of all preachers, puts so much emphasis on self-examination at the conclusion of this extraordinary sermon? It communicates to us that Christ recognized that men are always in danger of deceiving themselves when it comes to the spiritual state of their souls. This is precisely why He presses the danger of self-deceit home, for He is not preaching this sermon to Gentiles, but to sons and daughters of Abraham! He is preaching this sermon to men and women to whom the Word of God had been mercifully entrusted—men and women who were now following Him and hearing His words. He is calling hearers of His Word to engage in this serious self-examination.

Christ engages in what is referred to as discriminatory preaching—preaching that discriminates between true and counterfeit faith. He thereby exemplifies that the preaching of His servants today must also be discriminatory. The great Prophet of righteousness, the Living Word of God, tells His hearers that merely because they are hearing Him does not ensure entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

The words of our text are therefore striking and unsettling. These words make me tremble, and they are words that should also make you tremble because Christ says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Our entrance into His kingdom is not guaranteed by merely calling Him Lord, and by merely professing His name publicly. He purposely repeats the word "Lord" to emphasize that He is not referring to someone who is flippant about his profession, but rather, to someone who says, "Lord, Lord." The conclusion is inescapable: confessing the lordship of Jesus with our lips does not mean that we shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Christ is saying that a profession of His lordship without the confirmation of a life that re-

veals true subjection to His lordship is a profession of no value in God's sight.

I must therefore ask you, what sort of profession of the lordship of Christ are you making? Christ is telling us here that on that final day He will personally subject our profession to His examination. Take note that the One who prophesies here will be the Judge of all the earth who knows with perfection what will happen on that day. He is telling us here that on that day there will be many who will appear before Him with an empty profession of His Name. Such people will have submitted themselves verbally to His lordship, but the evidence or fruit of true subjection to Him will be lacking. It will be confirmed that they never were His true followers and disciples.

Christ evidently emphasized this fact because He knew better than any minister of the gospel ever could that the danger of self-deceit is great in the visible church as she gathers from Lord's Day to Lord's Day—a church filled with men and women who at least outwardly are professing His name. We all therefore need to ask ourselves the following questions: “Is our profession genuine? Do we love and serve the Lord whose Name we profess? Is there evidence in our lives that we have not only come to Christ as poor, needy sinners, but that we are also His obedient followers?” For the crucial truth Christ is emphasizing here is that union with Him will always result in likeness to Him. Coming to Christ and becoming like Christ are inseparably connected; consequently, when such likeness is consistently absent in our lives—when we profess one thing but the fruits of our lives reveal the opposite—then it must be concluded that a vital and saving union with Christ is lacking, for true saving faith will always produce the fruit of a godly life. James underscores this by saying that faith without works is dead (James 2:17–26).

Having said this, I recognize fully that these sobering words of Christ also make God's children tremble, for when they examine their own lives and consider all

their sinful failures and inconsistencies, the troubling question arises, "Lord, shall I yet prove to be an empty and fruitless professor of Thy Name?" They recognize that Christ will not at all be impressed on that great Day of Judgment with a striking conversion story, for a conversion that is not affirmed by a godly life, and thus by genuine Christ-likeness, will be of absolutely no value.

"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." The use of the present tense in the original Greek phrase, translated as "doeth the will of my Father," is significant here. Christ is referring to those who repeatedly, habitually, and continually are doers of His Father's will. Christ emphasizes that true believers who will enter the kingdom of Heaven are men and women whose habitual inclination is to live in obedience to the will of His Father.

Why does Christ wish to emphasize this point? It will become clear only when we recognize that it has everything to do with the purpose for which we were created. When God created Adam as a perfect and sinless human being, he was a doer of his Father's will. Adam was therefore a man whose natural inclination was to live in obedience to the will of his Maker. He loved his Maker and therefore also loved His will and precepts. The moment Adam fell, however, he became a doer of his own will. This is another way of saying that he became a sinner. Sin is the transgression of God's holy law; it is doing of our own will; it is doing what pleases ourselves. Natural man hates God and hates his neighbor because the natural heart is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law and neither, indeed, can be (Rom. 8:7).

What happens, however, when the Spirit of God performs the marvelous work of regeneration? He transforms a sinner into a new creation, and in so doing He also renews the will. The Spirit of God transforms a man from being an enemy of God and His law into a doer of

His will, and it consequently becomes his desire to do His Maker's revealed will.

Because of this new inclination, it is painful when the Spirit of God convicts us that we come short of the glory of God. What grief this causes in the souls of those in whose hearts the love of God has been shed abroad, and whose desire it has become to please God! Thus we conclude that regeneration transforms a sinner into a new creature. One of the clearest evidences of such a gracious transformation is that that sinner becomes a doer of the will of God.

We should also observe that Christ, in our text, specifically refers to the will of *His Father*. This is the first time, by the way, in the gospel of Matthew that Christ explicitly refers to this wonderful relationship that exists between Him and His Father. What then does Christ have in mind here when He defines godliness as a doing of the will of His Father?

Upon comparing Scripture with Scripture, it becomes clear that the will of the Father is as follows: It is the will of a Father who loves His eternal and only-begotten Son. Because of this infinite and eternal love for His Son, it is His will that His Son should be supremely honored in all things. If, then, it is the Father's supreme good pleasure to honor His beloved Son, what does the Father demand of us in terms of honoring His Son? We are to honor Him in two ways.

First, in 1 John 3:23, we read, "And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." This text states plainly that it is the Father's will that we believe in the name of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is, however, also the Father's will that we should honor His Son, secondly, in the pathway of obedience. This obedience is spelled out for us in the written Word of God that testifies of the Living Word, the Father's beloved Son. When, by the grace of God, we honor the written

Word by ordering our steps according to that Word, we are honoring the Living Word. We therefore conclude that it is the revealed will of the Father that we believe on His Son and obey His Son; that is, as believers in His Son, we are to follow and honor Him in the pathway of obedience.

This is precisely the kind of obedience that the Spirit of God produces in the lives of all regenerated sinners. He will transform them into doers of the will of the Father. He will so work in a sinner's heart that he comes to realize that, as a wretched, lost, and guilty sinner, there is only one solution for his soul, found solely in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit's special work to make Christ precious to our souls; He becomes the altogether lovely One for those who know themselves to be altogether guilty and vile. He will make room for this precious Savior in the heart so that such a sinner cannot but take refuge to Him and touch the hem of His garment.

Such coming to Christ, however, will always result in a sinner's becoming like Christ. Not only are we called to come to Christ, but we are also called to become *like* Christ. Those who have been worked in by God's Spirit and come to Christ savingly will inevitably also become like Him. Those two fundamental activities of genuine spiritual life are inseparably connected. Where the one is, the other will always be.

As stated earlier, James articulates this by saying, "I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18). He also says that faith without works is dead. In what appears to be contradictory to what Paul says, James then says that Abraham and Rahab were justified by works. But James is not teaching that we can be justified before God on the basis of our works; what he means is that the obedience of Abraham and Rahab confirmed that their faith was just—that is, that their faith was genuine. To say it in more theological terms, their sanctification justified their justification; it proved that their faith was genuine. Only habitual sanctification will prove that our

faith is real and genuine. Christ underlined the same truth when He said, “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:20).

Oh, beloved congregation, though you recognize your imperfection and sinfulness, can you say that Christ has become the only Name under heaven whereby you must be saved? Can you say that you hunger and thirst after His righteousness, and can you also say that you desire to honor this Christ with an obedient life—not to merit salvation, but to love such a Savior who, because of His marvelous work of redemption, is so worthy that you should honor Him by an obedient life?

It is this believing in and obeying of the Son that constitutes doing the will of the Father. Since the Father loves His Son, it is His will that we should honor His Son who is also the living Word of God. It is such honoring of the Living Word by being a doer of the written Word that defines for us the true meaning of being a doer of the will of the Father.

For emphasis, let me repeat that Christ uses the present tense to describe the activity of the doers of His Father’s will. As stated earlier, the use of the present tense in Greek means that Christ wants to make the point that true believers are a people who repeatedly and habitually do the will of His Father which is in heaven. And how can it be any different? A true Christian is united to Christ as a branch is grafted into the vine (John 15). When a fallen sinner is truly grafted into Christ by the Spirit of Christ, genuine spiritual life will flow into the vine and this spiritual branch will begin to bear fruit. Christ designates such fruit-bearing as the habitual doing of the will of His Father—not intermittently but habitually doing His will in every area of our lives.

That is the bottom line, for whoever is united to Christ will inevitably and unmistakably become like Christ. That living union between Christ and the believer will never fail

to bear fruit—and will never fail to produce people who, united to the Son of the Father, do the will of His Father.

This conclusion should not be interpreted to mean that the Lord Jesus is teaching that salvation is by works after all. Not at all! Rather, He is simply saying that the only thing that truly matters in the end is whether we have been doers of the will of our Father in heaven. Such doing of His will is the only biblically sanctioned evidence that our faith in Christ is genuine. It is a faith that will never fail to produce a sanctified life.

It is so important for us to keep in mind that these words come from the lips of the living Word Himself—from the lips of the Savior of sinners. They come from the lips of Him who will once judge the living and the dead. He is saying with utmost solemnity that the only thing that ultimately matters on the Day of Judgment is whether we have been doers of the will of His Father.

2. An Urgent but Futile Plea

Christ goes on to say that there will be many who will say to Him in that day—the day when all men shall be summoned before the judgment seat of Christ—“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?” We need to give special attention to the fact that He uses the phrase “in thy name” three times in this statement. There will be many who will come before Him saying, “But Lord, consider all that I have done—all the activity I have been engaged in, not for my name but for Thy Name.” The truth that really needs to sink in here is that many will say these words in utter astonishment. Because of all they have done in the name of Christ, they will fully expect to enter heaven. It will therefore be to their utter dismay that they discover that Christ will send them to hell instead.

Let me add parenthetically that Christ is not addressing the Scribes and Pharisees here. They never

acknowledged Him as Lord, nor did they ever do anything in His name. On the contrary, they hated Him with a bitter hatred and scorned the idea that He was the Son of God. It should therefore be rather obvious that Christ did not have them in mind at all. Instead, Christ is addressing people who publicly acknowledge His lordship and who have been actively engaged in doing things in His name. There will be many who will make that claim when they appear before Him in the Day of Judgment—not a few, but many!

I need to confess that these words have shaken me to the core of my being. It is painfully clear to me that the first category of people Jesus is referring to are those who have prophesied in His name—that is, those who have proclaimed His Word on His behalf. That means that He is referring here to ministers of the gospel. There will be many preachers who will say to Christ in that day, “But I have preached in Thy name all the days of my life.”

We need to understand that this preaching is indeed what the word “prophesied” means here. In Scripture, this word not only refers to the foretelling of the future, but it first and foremost refers to the proclamation of the Word of God. A prophet in Scripture was a proclaimer of God’s truth, and at times that also included the foretelling of the future. Christ is therefore saying that there will be many in that day who have spoken in His Name and who in utter astonishment will say, “Lord, how is this possible? How canst Thou tell me to depart from Thee when all the days of my life I have preached in Thy Name? How can this possibly be?”

What a day it will be when the books of remembrance will be opened and when everything will be unveiled! All pretense will be gone forever, and, as never before, all things will be opened and naked before the God with whom we have to do.

That day many will claim to have cast out devils in Christ’s name and to have done wonderful works in His

name. You see, Christ is addressing religious engagement that is not adorned by a life of genuine holiness. Christ is therefore saying to us, "If, along with all your religious activity and all the things you may have done in My name, you have not been a doer of the will of My Father—if all of your religious activity has not been adorned by genuine, habitual, and consistent godliness—it will all have been in vain."

This declaration means that among those whom Christ will send to hell there will be many who have done work in God's kingdom. This will include many ministers, elders, deacons, teachers, seminary professors, and respectable and active church members. They all have in common the belief that their religious engagement has been done in Christ's Name.

Beloved, these are not my words! These are the words of the One who will be the Judge of all the earth in that day. These will be the words of One who knows with perfection what will transpire in that day. He was telling His audience, and He is telling us today, "Do not deceive yourself. Do not think that just because you are active in the church and profess to be doing all this in My Name, you shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

You need to understand that in the final analysis it will not matter at all that I personally have been a minister of the gospel. It will not help me in that day that I have preached so many sermons if my ministry has also not been adorned by genuine godliness—evidence that there is a real, living, and fruit-bearing union between the Lord Jesus Christ and my soul. If I have not been a consistent doer of His Father's will, it will cancel out all that I have done in His name.

Just before our text, the Lord Jesus said, "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" In other words, it is impossible to expect a thistle to bring forth edible fruit. It cannot do so—and neither would we expect this fruit from a thistle. This impossibility is also true

spiritually. If we are not spiritually united to Christ and thus if our faith is not genuine, it will reveal itself by the habitual absence of spiritual fruit—by a consistent failure to do the Father’s will.

Congregation, when I think of North American Christianity, I am fearful that there is so much fruitless Christianity. I am fearful that there will also be many North Americans who, upon being summoned before the Judge of all the earth, will be aghast and say, “How can this be? I thought for sure that I was destined for heaven. I thought for sure that all that I did for the kingdom of heaven would qualify me to enter into heaven.”

Many will say this to Christ! He will, however, proceed by saying, “And then will I profess unto them...” It is remarkable that Jesus should choose that word “profess.” He is saying, “You have made your profession, but your profession will prove to be no more than an illusion. And now I will make My profession.” We read that He will say, “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

3. An Irreversible Pronouncement

Having considered Christ’s solemn assessment, followed by an urgent plea, let us now consider in the third place Christ’s irreversible pronouncement. “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you.” That is quite a statement, congregation! First of all, it proves that there is no such thing as the apostasy of the saints. A Christian cannot lose his salvation. Christ will say to them, “I *never* knew you.” You may respond, “How can this be? How can the Judge of the all the earth say, ‘I never knew you?’” Does He, who is also very God, not know everything? Will not He know everything about us in that day?

In answering this question, we need to understand that Christ uses a word here that is used throughout the New Testament to describe knowledge that is experiential in nature. It refers to a knowledge acquired by being

in a relationship with someone, such as the knowledge a husband has of his wife and the wife of her husband, parents of their children, etc. It is acquired through an experiential relationship with someone and is therefore referred to as experiential knowledge.

To such knowledge Jesus is referring when He will say to many who will appear before Him that He never knew them. They will be the many who have called Him "Lord, Lord," who have confessed His name, and who were religiously very active. And yet they will be the many who have not been doers of the will of His Father, who did not live godly lives as a confirmation that their faith was Spirit-wrought and genuine, and in whose lives the evidence was lacking that they were living branches of the vine Jesus Christ.

Jesus will say to them, "There never was an experiential relationship between you and Me. I never knew you. There was never any connection between you and Me because had there been that connection, you would have borne fruit. But the consistent absence of the fruit of evangelical obedience, as well as your lifestyle that contradicted what you professed, only confirm that there was never a real relationship between us. I have never known you, and therefore you must now depart from me."

Oh, what solemn words they are: "Depart from me!" They will come from the same lips that now say to us even today: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). They will come from the lips of a Savior who has promised in His Word that He will in no wise cast out those who come unto Him. That Savior will then be the Judge of all the earth! To all those who have paid lip service to His name, who have professed His lordship without living in subjection to it, and who have done many things in His name, the Savior of sinners will say, "Depart from me."

Congregation, that command simply means that Jesus is telling them, "You must now go to hell." Though

they professed to be disciples of Christ and did things in His name, in the final analysis, these people will ultimately prove to be unbelievers after all—that is, ungodly men and women who never truly subjected themselves to the lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ. In that great Day of Judgment, Christ will expose them for what they really are: unbelievers. They will be men and women who never had any experiential knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, who never walked with Him, who never abode in Him, who never lived out of Him, and who never truly hungered and thirsted after Him and His righteousness.

He will say, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” The word “iniquity” can also be translated as lawlessness, and thus Christ is addressing those that work lawlessness. Another way to rephrase this would be, “Depart from me, you antinomians,” for that is exactly what this word means. An antinomian is someone who professes the name of Christ but has no use for the law of God. He is someone who believes that Christ came to deliver us from the law itself rather than from the curse of the law.

An antinomian is therefore someone who boasts of being a Christian but lives a life that contradicts his profession. Christ is referring to such when He is speaking of those who work iniquity. By these carefully chosen words, He is contrasting doing iniquity with doing His Father’s will. The people He sends away will be those who, instead of having been doers of His Father’s will have been workers of iniquity—in spite of the profession they have made.

With sadness we must conclude that antinomianism is rampant around us. Why is that so? I fear that this is a direct result of rampant presumption. There is so much presumptive faith, and there are so many presumptive conversions. Hopefully you will see the connection, for presumption and antinomianism are like Siamese twins. They are inseparably connected because a presumptuous believer is not a true believer at all; consequently, there will be no godliness to confirm that such faith is genuine,

for there is no living and fruit-bearing union with Christ. The absence of genuine union with Christ will always be exposed by the absence of genuine godliness.

Oh, beloved congregation, how will you and I fare in that day? It is with considerable reluctance that I confront you with this question. I take no delight in the fact that this message may shake you to the core of your being. And yet it is a message I must bring! As servants of God, it is our holy obligation to call you to serious self-examination. If we fail to do so, God will righteously be able to require your blood from our hands. Yet we also do this out of love for you, for when we must appear before Christ on that day, our religion will have to be the right sort—a religion vindicated by a life of evangelical obedience to God's revealed will.

It will not help us one bit if our place has always been at the Lord's Table. There will be many who will say in that day, "But, Lord, we have always dined with Thee. We have always sat at Thy table." He will then say to them, "I must declare to you that I never knew you; even though you came to My table, you were nonetheless a worker of iniquity." Do not deceive yourself by thinking that just because you come to the Lord's Table, all will be well with you. This simply is not so. On that day, the King will come and look at the guests, and He will immediately see who they are who have entered without a wedding garment—without being clothed with the garment of His righteousness.

Oh, congregation, this is such a serious matter! When that day arrives, the sheep and the goats will be divided perfectly, resulting in an eternally irreversible separation. On the right side of Christ will be all who truly love Him in sincerity and who have demonstrated that love by loving His commandments. And on His left side will be those who have merely paid lip service to Him, while simultaneously indulging in sin—all who in spite of their profession will prove to have been workers of iniquity.

As you know, on numerous occasions Christ established the link between loving Him and obeying Him, saying: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). He thereby stressed the important truth that we prove our love for Him by following Him in the pathway of obedience. It is rather easy to say, “I love Jesus.” But those words mean nothing if we are not at the same time doers of His Father’s will.

Dear friends, I am well aware of the fact that God’s children will take all of this very much to heart and may go home, saying, “I shall yet prove to be one of them.” Why? They know that their sanctification is often so deficient. They think of the sins they still commit—not only ignorantly but also against better knowledge. When God’s children fall into sin, when they are backslidden, and when they do not see any fruits in their lives, they become so troubled. They fear that they will prove to be self-deceived or a hypocrite after all. Do you know why this is so? It is because every true believer knows intuitively that there is an unbreakable relationship between faith and obedience. Therefore, when God’s children backslide, they will lose their assurance because the tangible evidence of their faith is lacking.

Perhaps it is your question: “How can I know whether I am a doer of the Father’s will, knowing that if I am not, I will not enter the kingdom of heaven?” It is because of that unsettling question that every true believer is so grateful that God inspired the Apostle Paul to record the latter half of Romans 7. There we hear the groan of a doer of God’s will. There we read of Paul wrestling intensely with the reality of sin in his life. How this grieved him! Why? Because, by the transforming grace of God, he was a doer of the will of God. As a lover and doer of God’s will, he grieved over his sin—his failure to do God’s will.

Let us therefore turn to Romans 7:14–25 to examine ourselves. Notice what Paul says in verse 15: “For that which I do I allow not.” In other words, Paul is saying

that he finds himself doing things that he is opposed to—things contrary to what he would like to do. This is confirmed by what follows: "...for what I would..." In other words, he is saying, "There is something I so much would desire to do, namely, to honor God in every aspect of my life. And yet, what I desire to do I do not, but what I hate, that I do."

This point is very important, for though God's children still sin, they hate it! Can you say that too, congregation? Can you say that you hate your sin, your backsliding, those sinful thoughts, and all those ways in which you dishonor the Christ whom you love with your whole soul?

In verse 16, Paul proceeds by saying: "If then I do that which I would not..."; that is, "If I do that which is against my desire, 'I consent unto the law that it is good.' The very fact that I hate my sin only confirms that I do love the law of God." He continues: "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me." The desire to do God's will and the desire to please and honor Him is most certainly there. That desire causes him to groan, saying, "...but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

Congregation, do you recognize Paul's perplexity in your own life? Is it your desire to honor God in every aspect of your life—in the work place, in your marriage, in your family, and in whatever other sphere of life there may be? Do you find yourself not doing that which you long to do, and committing evil you do not want to do? Are there sins you do not want to commit and yet find yourself doing? Again, Paul verbalizes this struggle when he writes, "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man."

There you have it! This text is the confession of a doer of the Father's will—someone who can wholeheartedly say, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." This is one of the unmistakable evidences of having become a new creature through regeneration. This confession is the evidence of the life that God plants in the soul of a sinner. This is the confession of the new man within the believer, for the new man is oriented toward God and delights himself in the law of God.

There is the old nature that relentlessly attempts to regain the territory he has lost, causing the believer to say with Paul, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Then follows that holy groan: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Congregation, this is the groan of a doer of the Father's will! Here is a man who longs for the day when he will finally be delivered from the body of this death—when he will finally be able to serve Christ perfectly. Paul, and every true believer with him, longs for that day when he will sin no more and be able to live in perfect obedience to the will of God.

Dear friends, do you long for that day? Do you understand the Apostle Paul when he cries out, "Oh, I want to be delivered from the body of this death. I want to be delivered from sin itself"? That is the cry of a man in whose heart the love of God has been shed abroad, and who has been made willing in the day of God's power. That is the cry of a man who has been regenerated by the Spirit of God, who has been transformed from being an enemy of God into being a doer of the Father's will.

Yet there is more! The same Paul who mourns deeply over the poverty and failure of his sanctification also cries out by faith, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." That is where he ends! Dear child of God, that is where we need to end also. I realize that

this sermon may have been quite unsettling for you. Let me assure you that it has also been unsettling for me—very unsettling indeed! I realize that Christ is talking here about someone like me—about one who has prophesied in His name. Therefore, how we all need to examine ourselves in the presence of an all-knowing and heart-searching God.

David exclaims in Psalm 139:23–24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me.” This petition also contains the confession of one who is a doer of the Father’s will. He is saying, “Lord, see if there be any disobedience in me, and if so, then please ‘lead me in the way everlasting.’” That was truly his desire; we too need to pray, “Search me, O God.”

Are there perhaps those among us who have arrived at the painful conclusion that what they profess with their lips is not exhibited in their lives? Then I plead with you not to persevere in your self-deceit. You may possibly know the scene in *Pilgrim’s Progress* where Bunyan observes that even from the very gate of heaven there is a way that leads to hell. There will be professing Christians who will make it that far but will not enter—men and women who died thinking they would surely enter heaven but will open their eyes in hell.

Congregation, as painful, disturbing, and unsettling as this sermon may be, it is better to be unsettled, troubled, and shaken today than to experience what Christ here prophesies, namely, to stand before Him utterly surprised and aghast, saying, “How can it be that I should not enter into the kingdom of heaven?”

My friend, should you still be someone who only professes Christ’s name while not serving Him, then acknowledge it before God this very hour. Fall on your knees before Him and say, “Lord Jesus, my life has been an empty religious show. I have professed Thy name, but I have not been a doer of the will of the Father.”

If this is your sin, and if with utmost honesty you are taking a hard look at yourself and your profession of the name of Christ, then the Lord is saying to you today, “Sinner, should you be guilty of having deceived your soul, then I say to you, ‘Oh, come and let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them as snow; though they be red as crimson, I will make them as wool’” (Isa. 1:18).

Seek the Lord Jesus today. Ask Him to make you willing by His Spirit in the day of His power, to draw you with the cords of His love, and to renew and transform you so that, by His grace, you will not only profess the name of Christ but also follow Christ in the pathway of genuine, evangelical obedience.

Congregation, we have heard the Word of the Savior who has included this passage in His Word because He has no pleasure in our death, but that we should turn to Him and live. To underscore the importance of what He said, He concludes with yet another analogy: someone who hears His Word and does it is like a wise builder, but he who hears the Word and does not do it is like a foolish builder. Do you observe that He again emphasizes the doing of His Word—the doing of His Father’s will?

Lest we would still miss the point, it is as if Christ is saying, “I will yet add one more illustration, one more parable, to make perfectly clear what I mean.” This parable reminds us of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins—a parable that also calls us to serious self-examination. The urgent and pressing question therefore is: are you a wise or a foolish builder? Are you a wise or a foolish virgin?

Let us seek the Lord; let us seek Him while He is yet to be found. Do not rest until, on the basis of biblical evidence, you know that you are indeed a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ—until you know that the fruits of the saving work of God’s Spirit are manifesting themselves in your life. You need to be able to say in the presence of an

all-knowing, heart-searching, and all-seeing God, "Lord, thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that in spite of my sin and backsliding, I love Thee, and Thou knowest that I love to do Thy will. Thou knowest that it is my desire to live a life that honors Thee. Oh, God, remember me in mercy and look upon me for Christ's sake."

If, therefore, you grieve over your sin, dear believer, and if even now you have been convicted of the discrepancy between your profession and your life, then the precious Word of God addresses you, saying: "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2).

Let me conclude by urging you with all the love of my heart not to rest until you know that your faith is genuine—that you are indeed a living and fruit-bearing branch of the vine Jesus Christ. Only then can it be well with your soul. The Apostle John underscores this when he writes, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 John 2:3-5).

My final and urgent question therefore is, are you in Christ, and do you know Him experientially? If so, you will be a doer of His Father's will—even if your doing of the Father's will is still tainted with sin and you have only a small beginning of this new obedience. The fact remains, however, that Christ declares with clarity and simplicity in our text that only the doers of His Father's will—and they alone!—shall enter the kingdom of heaven, for "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:17). Amen.