

# The Danger of False Profession

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As you know, I've been preaching on the Lord's Prayer over the past few weeks, had planned to do that again this morning, but in light of events, I felt maybe that it was important to say things of another nature to you here this morning for the sake of everyone that is under the sound of my voice. The church is the pillar and the support of truth, as we saw. Now, beloved, our position on matters related to Scripture, to the gospel, to the Catholic Church, to the Reformation, we have not said anything in a corner. Our pulpit has spoken again and again on the matters of the Bible and Roman Catholicism. You can find those things online. We've spoken on the five Solas of the Reformation. You can find those things online. And yet, twice in the past 18 months, we have dismissed members for turning to Roman Catholicism, people from our midst, people who made the same confession that you and I make, and we need to understand that, and we need to pause here today, this morning, and to take a little bit of spiritual inventory of ourselves, you and me, I've taken this inventory to which I will be calling you here this morning, but I want you to make no doubt and to have no question in your mind about the utter significance of what is happening around us in light of these things.

Scripture says that, "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places, therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm." Beloved, the open manifestation of an inclination to Catholicism within the body of Truth Community Church of all places, is a flagrant and a brazen invasion of Satan trying to lead people astray, and Satan is a supernatural foe, and we do not have the strength and resources within ourselves standing alone to resist them. We must look beyond and not just say, "Oh, well, this is just a difference of opinion." No, this is not a mere difference of opinion. Whether the carpet should be brown or blue, that's a difference of opinion. Whether the gospel is by faith alone or found only in the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic system, that's a matter of another order altogether.

And so we recognize that there is this evil spiritual resistance to us that simply manifested itself in these matters to which I briefly alluded, but it signifies something more than that. I realize that most of you, at least I'm assuming, I keep learning not to assume too much as a pastor, I'm assuming that many of you are under no inclination to turn to Catholicism specifically. I know that for some of you, your greatest joy is that you've been delivered from that system and you know something about the joy and the

liberty of Christ and being forgiven and not being under that system of rules and intimidation. And so I recognize that. But beloved, there is more than one way to be in the midst of the people of God and let me clarify, to be in the midst of the physical presence of the people of God and yet not truly belong to Christ, to not truly share in the spiritual fellowship because you are outside of Christ. Scripture speaks to that repeatedly, and that's the subject of today's message. The title of today's message is, "The Danger of False Profession." The danger of false profession, and while we have mentioned this in the context of Roman Catholicism, realize that it's a symptom of another issue, of another problem, of another threat. You know, we've just seen symptoms just like a nagging cough might only be a cold or it might be a sign of lung cancer; you have to dig a little deeper to find out the root and the source and to take action accordingly. And beloved, as we're going to see on a day like today, in light of the things that have happened in recent history at Truth Community Church, I, as the pastor of this church, I have a concern for you, I have a responsibility to you, to inform you, to protect you, to caution you, to call you to certain things. And in light of all of that, I want you to turn, if you will, to the book of Philippians chapter 3. Philippians chapter 3, and at the beginning and at the end of the sermon, I'm going to, as it were, through the printed page, invite Charles Spurgeon to stand with me as I preach this message here this morning.

But for now, we simply read from the biblical text, Philippians 3, beginning in verse 17. Paul says, "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us." And here's the key text, "For many," many, "of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things." Paul in this passage is decrying the reality of false professors. His heart is broken as an apostle over the matter. Notice that he's writing to one of the outstanding churches in the New Testament, the church at Philippi, the church that brought him so much joy, and yet he sees the need to warn and to caution even them about the reality of opposition coming from within. And as in kind of in comparison to what we read in 1 John 2, verse 19, "they went out from us," in other words, "they left us, but they were not really of us," they weren't of the same spirit, of the same faith as us, "because if they had been of the same faith of us, they would have remained with us, but they went out in order that it might be shown that they are not all of us." The sad thing about false professors, as you read Scripture closely, is that they are common. This is a common problem in the pages of the New Testament, and therefore a common problem in the church today.

Beloved, hear me as I say this: there is a heaven, but not everyone in the church will go there. Charles Spurgeon said this very early in his ministry. He said, "Beloved, I have a message to deliver tonight, which is to the same effect as that of the Apostle Paul, and I am afraid it is as necessary now as it was in his time. There are many now among us, as there were then, who walked in such a manner that we recognize them at once as the enemies of the cross of Christ. Their life is not consistent with the great things of God." Later, he went on to say in that same sermon, he said, "The greatest sorrows of the church have been brought upon her, not by the arrows shot by her foes, not by the discharge of the artillery of hell, but by fires lit in her own midst, by those who have crept into or

under the guise of good men and true, but who are spies in the camp and traitors to the cause." Beloved, Scripture warns us about false profession. Spurgeon warns us about false profession. The history of Truth Community Church warns us about the danger of false profession, and you and I, this morning, we need to humble ourselves under the word of God and examine ourselves in the way that Scripture would call us to do.

So I want to warn you about five dangers that will keep you out of heaven, five dangers that make it possible for false professors to exist within the life of the body of Christ, but we've already established the necessary principle to consider these matters carefully. Listen carefully to what I'm about to say: not all that profess Christ actually possess Christ. There can be a distinction between the confession on a tongue and the reality that is in the heart of the one making that profession, and we'll see this as we go along in just such clear and unmistakable ways. And so my prayer before God this morning is that the Holy Spirit would open your eyes to take all of these things to heart, take them to heart for your own self, of course, take them to heart as you consider your interactions and relationships with others, realizing that not only is heaven real, but Satan is real. Hell is real, and hell is not only real, hell is painful. Hell is eternal, and it is only the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is only Christ himself, through his gospel, that can deliver you from that awful eternal destination, that destination in which you are in an abode of some kind, and now I speak metaphorically, an abode that stamped in the archway to it on the front and on the back is "The residence of the damned." And when you enter in there, there is no coming out. There is no change. You know, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God is immutable. And when someone enters into the realm of hell as the judgment for their sins and their false religion, beloved, that condition is immutable. There is no change to that and the punishment that is inflicted at the start is the punishment that is in place eons later as well, and we will make all of these things clear from Scripture as we go along.

And so the point is, the point is here this morning is that there are consequences to these things, and I realize that in the midst of a busy life, a difficult life, challenges that make it difficult just to get by from day to day, I realize that it's easy to push eternal matters to the side while you're trying to deal with the present. I realize that when your heart is broken over things of the earth that maybe it's a little bit difficult to turn your attention to eternal things but, beloved, you have to overcome that inertia in your heart, you have to realize that there is a life beyond the grave, a life that is eternal and that the consequences of eternity are far more important than anything that is happening here on earth and in life here today. And so it is incumbent upon us to hear these things and to take to heart these five dangers of which I now direct your attention.

First of all, the danger about false profession, the danger of seeking the way to heaven, first of all, it's this, number one, there's the danger of the narrow way. The danger of the narrow way. The first danger to your soul, the first thing that makes it easy to make a false profession is to make it on false grounds and on false understandings of what the truth is. And the danger to your soul is this: Jesus says it is a narrow path to heaven. Matthew chapter 7, if I haven't already told you to turn there. Matthew 7, verse 13 and 14, look at it with me here, and take to heart the implicit warning that is within it, to see

that I'm not giving you my opinions, this is not the word of man, this is not an appeal to some forgotten church father to determine what's true. We're looking at the words of Jesus Christ. We're looking at the inspired word of God here and seeing what God says and we can trust what God says because God is a God of truth and everything that he says is truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," and so by very essence, by very nature, whatever comes out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ is true. It is reality. It is the way things really are. And it is just so imperative for you and I to come in submission to that truth, to submit our minds to that truth, and then govern ourselves accordingly. I take that as pretty basic, fundamental truth.

Verse 13 of Matthew 7, Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many." There are 1.25 billion, with a B, Catholics in the world today. That's a wide road. That is many people. That, by definition, should make you suspicious but this is not about Catholicism, it's about broader things than that. "The gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Those who find it are few. In the most direct, plain language, Jesus says that there are comparatively few that go to heaven. Oh, there will be a multitude around the throne, yes, of course, but compared to those that are lost, the proportion is not what people like to think. People like to think that hell is reserved for a select few of the most obvious and scandalous of sinners. You would expect to find Hitler there, is the way people think, maybe one or two others, but the abundance of people will be safe and well, and we don't need to really trouble ourselves over this because everybody, with the exception of a tiny few, end up in heaven in the end. Doesn't matter what you believe, doesn't matter what your religion is. Seen headlines of the despicable Pope saying similar things, even this week saw something that he was kissing the hands of a Muslim leader saying we need all the religions to help us out here. Jesus says just the opposite. In plain terms, he says it is easy to go to destruction. It's much more difficult to go to heaven than it is to hell.

And so, beloved, here's the first point of application, the first question that I would ask of you in your situation today and let me just say this before I say this. I intend this to be a perfectly pastoral message, however imperfectly I do it. Forget about everybody else in the room. Forget about, you know, the people that you know and say, "Oh, I wish they were here to hear that." No, God brought you here today by his providence, God brought you here today to hear these things for you. Let's just receive this as though I'm speaking to you privately as much as I am speaking in a public way. And so when I say "you" here this morning and ask the question, would you be wise, I'm asking this in the first person singular, would you individually be wise in light of the danger of the narrow way? Would you be wise in light of the danger of false profession? Well, beloved, one of the ways that you can be wise in response to the teaching of Christ is this: pay attention to Scripture, and don't take your eternal soul for granted just because you made some empty profession of faith decades ago that never affected your life.

Don't take these things for granted. Jesus commands us to make effort. He says in Luke 13, verse 24, "strive to enter through the narrow door." He says, strive, exert effort to find

the narrow way. He says, "for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." That's Luke 13:24. You can read it for yourself after the service. Jesus says there's going to be many that'll knock and say, "Lord, let us in," and he'll say, "No, the time has passed. The day of salvation is extinguished. There is no more time. There is no more opportunity." And so the exhortation of Scripture to the wise is to take the time to pay attention and to strive to enter through the narrow door.

One of the marks of a false professor is they won't bother to search Scripture for themselves. They say, "I'm not a reader and so consider me excused from searching Scripture for myself. I'm not a reader. Don't you understand, I don't read." Well, if faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ, you better become a reader. You better start to open the word of God and read what it has to say in places like the gospel of Matthew or the gospel of John if you're going to take seriously the danger of false profession and being sent away. Good heavens, people, what kind of a fool says things like that in light of the eternal issues that are at stake? You need to exert the effort to find the narrow way and make sure you know Scripture well enough to know that you're resting on the sure foundation that we sang about just moments ago.

One of the marks of false professors is they won't bother to search Scripture for themselves, that's the danger of the narrow way. Secondly, there's the danger of supernatural resistance. The danger of supernatural resistance and for this, turn just a little further in the gospel of Matthew to Matthew 13, and as you're turning there, in the parables of Jesus in the pages of Scripture, we see it repeatedly taught that Satan hinders the advance of the gospel. He hinders it broadly speaking; in the book of Acts, Paul said Satan hindered us from going into a particular geographic region to preach, so he went a different direction. Scripture says that there is a supernatural hindrance in individuals as well. And what I want to read to you, you're familiar with the parable of the sower. Jesus said there was a sower that went out and he sowed the seed and it fell on different kinds of ground, hard ground, weedy ground, so forth. And then he explained the parable and one of the things that he said was that you sow some seed and a bird comes and eats it and takes it away. Well, here in Matthew 13:18, and 19, we see his interpretation of one aspect of the parable of the sower. He says, "Hear then the parable of the sower." You see, beloved, he says, "Hear this, pay attention to this, listen, heed what you're about to hear," he says. He's not simply saying, you know, let the words go inside your ear, he's saying, "Listen and pay attention and heed and take it to heart." Verse 19, "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path." You see, beloved, the saving gospel falls on many ears and yet it does not take root in the heart because Satan takes the word away.

In 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4, there's a very critical passage that you should all be familiar with, Christian and non-Christian alike. Paul, speaking about unbelievers, says this, "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." In 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4, Paul's describing a supernatural hindrance to the gospel, a supernatural blinding of the mind. It's as though you're in a room where the light is

coming in or beginning to come in, and Satan comes and pulls down the blinds and bricks in the window so that no more light comes in and it cannot penetrate because of that supernatural hindering work of the devil. And beloved, the sad thing about this, is that an unsaved person does not have the capacity to overcome that supernatural work of the devil. He cannot protect himself. He cannot turn the light on in his own mind. Scripture describes him as dead and under the domination of the devil. Jesus said, "You are of your father, the devil."

So, in light of that, I ask, would you be wise in light of the danger of false profession, in light of the danger of the narrow way, in light of the danger of supernatural resistance, would you be wise? Then, beloved, let me give you help on what you should do. You should bow your heart before Christ. You should bow your heart before God if not literally bow your knees and ask him for help in this spiritual battle. Christ rules over Satan. He's greater than Satan. Scripture tells us that greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world. Satan is not a completely unbound foe. He is not omnipotent. He is subject to the restraints of Christ. His work is subject to the overruling and contradiction of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. But that's not power that's in your possession yourself to do, you're helpless beforehand, and so what you need to do is you need to go and you need to ask Christ, "Please help me. I don't even understand the fullness of everything that I've heard but, Lord, I sense that I am in danger, that my mind is incapable of hearing the things that I need help with, the things that would deliver me, that there is a supernatural foe, a supernatural enemy that hinders me, and I cry out to you as the Commander of Hosts, as the Lord of angel armies, as the one who has the power to deliver from sin and Satan and hell, I appeal to you to help me. Lord, I am striving in my prayers, asking you to help me so that I would not be carried away in the torrent of the activity of Satan, that you would come and rescue me from the murky seas of deception and help me."

That's what a wise person would do. There are false professors in the church because Satan blinds them and they are too careless, too indifferent to seek refuge. Jesus said strive to enter the narrow gate. He said the way is narrow. And I can anticipate, I will tell you for certain without knowing who in the room is having this kind of internal reaction to the things that I just said, there's a resistance of pride in the heart that says, "I'm not going to humble myself like that. I'm the captain of my soul. No one messes with me. I can handle this. I can be my own savior." The arrogance of that, the ignorance of that in light of what is revealed in Scripture. I said recently, ignorance and arrogance are a bad combination. To be ignorant of the devices of Satan makes you very vulnerable. To be so arrogant as to push away the words of Christ brought to you graciously by his Spirit, to push it away and to say, "I'm not worried about that and I don't need you to help me," a combination of ignorance and arrogance is greasing the slide that will use gravity to take your soul down into the pit.

Now, beloved, I ask you, when these things are so open and so obvious in Scripture, why would you do that? Why would you harden your heart against the instruction of the word? Why would you harden the heart of a gracious Savior who freely offers his help to you? Who warns you about the existence of an enemy and says, "I will deliver you from

him, just come to me." Why would you harden your heart? I tell you what, after hearing these things and in a greater way to have had Christ come to you and to warn you, to promise deliverance from you and to harden your heart and to turn away, there's only one thing to say. It's what the apostles said to the Jews that continually opposed their ministry, "Your blood be on your own head." It's not that you weren't warned. It's not that Christ wasn't gracious to bring you under the sound of the gospel. Oh. Oh, to think that people would stiffen their necks against a promise of eternal life and eternal deliverance.

Would you be wise, ask help from Christ and from the Spirit, and then turn to the word. Now thirdly, seeing the danger that is brought to us by the narrow way to heaven, the danger of supernatural resistance, there's a third danger that I want to call to your attention today, it's the danger of superficial confession. The danger of superficial confession and this is endemic in the church today, not simply in seeker-sensitive churches, but in the countless, not all, but the countless number of Southern Baptist churches that encourage superficial confessions from their people, baptize them on the flimsiest of testimonies without any examination to see if they're really in the faith, rushing young children who hardly know the difference between right and wrong into the waters of baptism, pronouncing them Christians and inoculating them against the gospel for the rest of their lives when they turn out to live in sin as so many of them do.

We need to address the danger of superficial confession because in that parable in Matthew 13, Jesus also said that superficial faith will keep you out of heaven and look at what he says in verses 20 to 22, and this needs to rock some worlds here before us this morning. Jesus says in Matthew 13 verse 20, "As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful." Beloved, I ask you just as a manner of general observation within the church of Jesus Christ, are there not people with superficial joy that when trouble comes, their world is undone? Perhaps even more pertinently and searchingly in a room like this, are there not those who are just so preoccupied with the cares of this world, so preoccupied with pursuing riches and career that it chokes out the word? You see it. You see it when you talk to them. Whatever there is about the word that might appear to be present in their lives, it's overgrown with weeds. It's like a beautiful flower that's in a bed of weeds that's been overgrown and you hear nothing but testimony of, "Oh, my financial trouble. Oh, my physical trouble. Oh, my career. Oh, my job. Oh, oh, oh, oh." To which I respond, yes, oh, oh, oh, oh. Woe, woe, woe, woe, W-O-E, woe. Don't you understand the things of which you're expressing or testifying to a heart, the words that come out of your mouth are expressing that which is in your heart and what your mouth is speaking about is a preoccupation with the riches and the worries of this world and Jesus warns you, oh people, people, people, Jesus warns you that a heart like that does not have the word in it to bring forth the fruit that is necessary for your eternal salvation. The weeds choke it out. Your anxieties and your cares and your preoccupation with worldly things that are not going to go into the casket with you to be buried in the ground, your preoccupation with such things is an indication

that maybe, just maybe, the word is not that which has taken root in your heart and is the thing of primary importance to you.

You see, my friends, men and women alike, they profess to turn to Christ. It's not without a considered earnest reflection that is needed. They act on emotion due to some pressure of a moment. They respond to false teaching that promises them and targets them because of their earthly anxieties and presents the gospel in earthly terms for earthly deliverance, and they respond on that basis without any real regard for sin, for repentance, for faith, for atoning blood. It's all just about the here and now, the cares of this world, and so they act on emotion, they respond to false teaching, and here's the thing, here's the thing, beloved, hear me on this one: they try to add Christ to their life without actually repenting from sin. They try to add Christ to things without ever breaking from their love for this world. And you can see it. When a testing comes, they turn away. It was never real. They're tossed by waves and carried around by the cares of the world, the cares that are all of passing things and their faith, Jesus says, there's many like this, hear the word, but preoccupied with the world. Hear the word, say something positive about Christ, and yet, when trouble comes, they're out of here. Would you be wise, my friend? Stop the games, realize the passing nature of this world and repent of your love for it, and take Scripture seriously. There are false professors in the church because there are so many who have never denied self, taken up the cross, and followed Christ, as he commands us to do in Mark chapter 8.

And so, there's the narrow way, there's supernatural resistance, there's superficial confession, fourthly, the danger of falling away. The danger of falling away. I could have put this under number three, under superficial confession, but it deserves a separate spot. I want you to turn to the book of Hebrews and as you're turning there, I realize that there could be an impatient spirit as these things are brought, "This is uncomfortable. I want this to be over. This is not something that interests me." It better interest you. We're talking about your eternal soul, not mine. There will be millions of people this afternoon watching three hours of football, for some people, six hours of football and planning for tomorrow night as well. You know, if you've got three, four hours to devote to an athletic event on a regular basis, let me tell you something, you've got an hour, you've got an hour to hear the word of God preached for the benefit of your eternal soul. You do. So I make no apologies for time today.

Fourthly, the danger of falling away. The book of Hebrews written to a community of Christians, gives repeated warnings to people that have heard the gospel but are in danger of falling away. Look at Hebrews 3, verse 12, and notice the appeal, the exhortation in these texts are precisely what I am laying before you for your own soul here this morning. Hebrews 3, verse 12 says, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." You see the danger there. It's precisely the danger that I've been telling you about. The deceitfulness of sin, the deceitfulness of Satan, the deceitfulness of your own heart. And what the writer of Hebrews says is, "Brothers," he's speaking to them generously, gathered together, he says, addressing them in an outward sense as



brothers, and saying, "Brothers, it's my responsibility to warn you to be careful, take care, watch yourself, lest in any of you, lest there be just one of you, an evil, unbelieving heart that would cause you to fall away from the living God." Outwardly identifying with the people of God, outwardly professing Christ, but inside there is this unrepentant, uninterested, hard heart that doesn't respond. Eventually a heart like that will fall away. And so Scripture comes and warns us in advance about this danger and says, it says, "Examine yourself now, lest you be one in this category."

Look at Hebrews chapter 6, verse 4. Scripture says, "it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come," they've been under the sound of the gospel without truly being converted, verse 6, "and then have fallen away," it's impossible, "to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned."

Chapter 10, verse 26. Again, remember that he's speaking to people that are in the context of a community of believers, but he realizes that there is a mixed audience to what he is saying. There are those who are truly converted, as there are here this morning, those truly converted, about whom he says, "I have confidence of better things for you," but then there are also these scattered about within the walls who have not been truly born again, who are in eternal danger. The writer of Hebrews says in 10 verse 26, "if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.'"

Now beloved, the point of these passages is not that true Christians can lose their salvation. That's not the point of these passages at all. The danger that he is addressing is that it is easy to outwardly identify with the people of God without the inward reality, and it is the inward reality that God calls us to. It is the greatest threat to the souls of everyone in this room. Now I'm speaking today, 21st century, September 8, 2024. It is the greatest danger to everyone in this room that you identify with the people of God only in an outward sense without the inward reality of conversion.

Jude alludes to this in the last book before Revelation. You don't need to turn there. I'll just read it to you. In Jude 3 and verse 4, he says, "Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people

have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."

Beloved, it's written all over the pages of Scripture, the danger of outwardly appearing to be a Christian, of outwardly presenting yourself as a Christian. You smile to the people of God. You say nice things about the sermon. You like a measure of religion and self-righteousness that kind of marks you out from the debauchery of the age, "I'm not like them." But it's a religion of pride and self. And I say it as with the the pain of giving birth, not that I know that by direct personal experience, but of wanting to bring forth something and the pain of delivering it, in all of that, there are some of you that you do not love Christ. Your will has not bowed to his. Life for you is about this world, and it's about you. If it's in your interest, if it would advance your selfish pursuits, you'd walk away. You would forsake Christ, be it tribulation or disappointment. You would show yourself to be a false professor.

And so I ask once again, would you be wise? Will you be wise? The answer to this danger, this danger of falling away is to humble yourself and to hear the word of God as the final authority, Sola Scriptura, not relying on the teachings of man or tradition. Hebrews 12 verse 25 gives this exhortation at the end of those many warnings. It says this, "See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven." God is warning from heaven through his word. As clearly as he spoke at the baptism of Christ and said, "This is my beloved Son, listen to him," now through his word, by his Spirit, he comes and says, "Heed the word. Heed the danger. Flee to Christ. Turn from the world. Turn from sin. Turn from self. Don't reject what's being said to you. Don't harden your heart again."

False professors fall away because they rely on their own power, their own understanding. They presume on the grace of God and say, "Surely it won't be that bad. Surely he doesn't mean, the word doesn't mean what it says." Beloved, let me tell you something: the Bible means what it says. As I've said many, many times, Jesus, when he teaches, he's teaching for keeps. He means what he says. When he speaks of eternal judgment, when he speaks of false professors and superficial confession and supernatural resistance, it's all true. And if you diminish that, deny it, it's a reflection of your ignorance or your arrogance, or possibly both. Your ignorance and arrogance are greasing the skids for you to go to hell. God sent you here today to warn you against that outcome. The question is, what will you do with it?

Finally, fifthly, the danger of final separation. The danger of final separation. My dear friends, I just ask you for a little eye contact just at the moment right now so that I can say to you this. I beg of you as one concerned for the eternal destiny of your soul, I beg of you not to glide along on the basis of a false profession of faith, not to glide along on a deception that you've successfully practiced on the people around you when you are not actually born again, when you do not actually have the Spirit of God within you. I beg you not to do that because the outcome is too great. We read this passage often, and I

think it's good that we do. Matthew 7, verse 21. You can turn there with me. Matthew 7, verse 21, there's a sort of a climactic element to the text here in light of everything that we've said and I have warned you today about the danger of false profession, and as I do that, I do it as a servant of Christ, as a servant of the word. I simply echo what the word first said long before you and I were ever born, when Jesus said, verse 21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven." How much clearer could Christ, the bearer of eternal salvation, be on this matter than that when he says, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven"? It's right there. What kind of fool says, "No, that's not a very serious threat." What kind of fool looks into the face of Christ as it's revealed in the word and says, "I'm not worried about that. I'll be fine. A good old bloke like me, what could go wrong?"

Jesus says, "Not everyone will enter the kingdom of heaven, even if my name is on their lips here on earth, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day," look at it there with me, beloved, lest you think that I have overstated the case and the danger here this morning. Verse 22, I offer this verse as the justification for everything that I've said and the decision to preach on this here to you today. Jesus said, "On that day many will say to me," many, not a few, not some. If Jesus had said a few, if he had said some, I probably wouldn't, maybe I wouldn't have troubled you with this. But Jesus said, "many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' O Lord, we did it all in your name. There must be some colossal misunderstanding here on your part. Look at all that I did. How could you possibly be considering sending me away? Don't you know who I am?" And Jesus will be utterly unpersuaded by that appeal. He says, "then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

Friends, for just a moment, enter into the picture of what Jesus is describing, and put yourself in the shoes of the people saying these things to our Lord at that time, and imagine that it's being said to you, you who have put on a show of Christianity for so long. We've seen that it can come from within the membership of this church, so no one's excluded from the danger of this. But put yourself in the shoes of having an expectation that heaven is going to gladly welcome you when you show up. "Guys, I'm here. Wait, what's the delay? Why am I in this line? Lord, this is the line for people being sent away, going to destruction. Why am I here? I did this. I did that." And to hear the Lord of judgment, Jesus said, "all judgment's been given into my hands," and to hear the Lord of judgment say, "Uh-uh, not you, not here. I never knew you. You have to leave now. Depart from my presence. You're a worker of lawlessness."

It's not the only time he spoke this way in the gospel of Matthew. Turn to Matthew 25, verses 41 through 46, and Jesus picturing the final judgment having separated the sheep from the goats, sheep on his right, goats on his left, representative of the redeemed and the lost, and speaking to many who were false professors on earth, "he will say to those on his left," it says in Matthew 25, verse 41, "Depart from me." There it is again. Jesus will say to many, "Depart from me." Oh, the horror of that moment! And I believe that

there will be a full understanding at that time for the one who is told to depart, the consequences that are just being unleashed upon his eternal soul.

"Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer," oh, they still speak back. Judgment itself won't take away the defiance of the unregenerate heart. The ignorance, the arrogance, and the defiance of the unbelieving heart, even in the immediate presence of Christ, after judgment is pronounced, they are still going to object. "Lord, you can't possibly be correct here. Your accusations against me are false."

"Lord," verse 44, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?" Prove it to me. "Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'" Your so-called faith was not expressed in works on earth. It was an empty confession, an empty profession. There was no living reality to it and your heart to this moment is still cold and defiant and ignorant and arrogant.

Verse 46, "these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." False professors will go to hell because they never knew Christ.

Beloved, mark this. We read Philippians 3 at the start, verse 18. Paul said, "I tell you, even weeping that they are enemies of the cross of Christ." Paul wept over the false converts. Oh, my eyes in this moment may be dry under the import of the moment but my heart weeps over the realities that we've seen here today and looking upon faces that I know some will be numbered in this terrible lot that I've described. Paul spoke, his tears showed that Paul spoke not from hostility, but from love. He spoke not from hostility, but from love. He was not, he was not their enemy because he told them the truth. He was not opposed to them.

I opened with Spurgeon. I'll close with Spurgeon in a separate sermon. That first one I quoted from, very early in his ministry. This many years later in his ministry. He said this. He said, "But while we speak of these people, it becomes us to be very tender for the apostle says, 'Of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping.' Why weeping? Because it is an awful thing for men to hear the divine and final sentence, 'Depart, you cursed ones.'" Spurgeon goes on to say, "I would not like to think of anybody here who would have that for his portion at the day of judgment, but I would be a gross traitor to your souls if I did not also add that I cannot help fearing that this will be the lot for some of you. You have never come to Christ. Perhaps you have professed to do so, or possibly you have neither done it nor professed to do it, and you are openly and avowedly antagonistic to the cross of Christ." Spurgeon says, "May God's grace convert you otherwise we may well weep over you, that you would die in your sins."

Beloved, I've spoken painful words to you today, but it has not been from any sense of hostility whatsoever. Not a bit. Not a bit. I speak the truth in love for your sake. Someone

has to take your soul seriously, even if you won't do it yourself. What I say to you, I say in a spirit of prayer to God, may God awaken you, may God convict you, may God turn your heart to the crucified and risen Christ who made a blood atonement for sinners just like you, and by the power of the Spirit, may the feeble love of a pastor incline your heart to seek the strong and eternal love of Christ revealed in his blessed gospel.

Let's pray together.

*Father, have mercy on us. I'm reminded, Lord, of the tax collector in Matthew 18 who cried out, "Have mercy on me, the sinner!" Such a simple prayer. And you said that man went away justified. He cried out to Christ for deliverance and Christ was glad to save him. Father, I think of the thief on the cross who in a moment of extremity said, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom," and you so graciously, under the greatest provocation that ever has happened on earth, as you were preparing to bear the weight of sin of all of your people hanging on the cross, unable to move, and in your grace and mercy and perfect composure, you looked at that thief on the cross who had cried out to you and you had time for him. You had mercy on him. You had compassion on him even in the midst of your outward affliction and you said, "Verily I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." Father, may we be encouraged to seek a Christ, the Christ who is like that, ready to bestow on anyone who truly calls upon him an immediate, permanent, complete, irrevocable pardon of sin and imputation of righteousness that would fully reconcile them to a holy God, no matter how long they've been playing a game of hypocrisy before men. Father, we've asked you to work in hearts. We've asked you to save people from within our midst. This morning, we've seen the glaring need for that, and yet it's something that we cannot accomplish by our own power. We're helpless to bring about salvation for ourselves, let alone for anyone else. And so we appeal to you, the gracious, merciful, kind, loving, patient God, and ask you for a free work of your Spirit in the hearts of many before us today. Father, we would not unsettle the true saints, may your Spirit bear witness with their spirit that they are children of God, but Father, your word says so many will prove to be false confessors. We can't bear the thought of that outcome without having spoken to forestall it. Father, your word testified, we have spoken, and now we commend the results of it all into your blessed, sovereign hands. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.*

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