

Text— Matthew 7:22-29

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Just prior to our Scripture selection, Jesus warns, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” (Matthew 7:15-20) Accordingly, it's wise and necessary for everyone to remember that a prophet or preacher's fruit is especially that which is taught and preached by that individual. The message which is proclaimed is to be tested, for truth and accuracy, by carefully comparing it with what the Holy Bible actually says and teaches on the subjects addressed, lest listeners be deceived by one who is a false prophet.

Realize that not every preacher is a true preacher of God's Word, for 1 Timothy 4:1-5 states, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

My friends, there is a rather large church-body led by a man who forbids his clergymen to marry and commands all his followers to abstain from meats on certain days and so forth. However, we just read in 1st Timothy chapter four that such teachings are doctrines of devils; therefore, we must beware of false prophets and their false

doctrines, for immediately preceding our sermon text, the Lord Jesus says, “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.” (Matthew 7:21) So, we all need to heed 1 John 4:1, which instructs, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

Hence, we can surely benefit from pondering our sermon text, which informs us about:

“FALSE AND TRUE CHRISTIANS”

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) How false Christians may appear outwardly
- 2) What characteristics identify true Christians and false Christians
- 3) Why it behooves everyone to pay strict attention to what Jesus teaches concerning false and true Christians

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Verses 22 & 23, ----- (Matthew 7:22-23)

There is a great Day of Judgment coming when Jesus visibly returns to earth in glory, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”— declares 2 Corinthians 5:10. Yes, it's as Matthew 25:31-33 relates, “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.”

It is on that great Last Day that *many will say to Jesus: 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? But then, Jesus will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Hence, there are false Christians who outwardly appear to be true Christians because of their external dress and seemingly pious behaviors, while internally their hearts are quite far from the Lord Jesus Christ. It's as Mark 7:6 informs us regarding what Jesus once told the scribes and Pharisees, saying unto them, "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Yes, there were hypocrites back when Jesus visibly walked on earth and there are hypocrites yet today— people who call themselves Christians, while they actually have NO real faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think about it. You can see church leaders and pastors attired in long decorative robes, miters, stoles, gold crosses and so forth: sanctimonious in appearance. They smear Jesus' name on the false and corrupt messages they preach, rendering mere lip-service to the Lord. Some such church leaders even claim to do miracles of healing. Nevertheless, the words they preach in Jesus' name ARE NOT JESUS' WORDS— are not the Words of the Holy Bible, are not God's Words! Consequently, despite outward appearances and deeds, the afore-described church leaders ARE FALSE CHRISTIANS and NOT TRUE CHRISTIANS!

Furthermore, there are folks who are not church leaders who are yet false Christians, for they may attend a church and say 'Lord, Lord' with their lips, but they do NOT believe on Jesus Christ in their mind and heart. They may even give money to feed the poor and homeless, which is certainly a civilly kind act. But, such folks – if they have a true Holy Bible – rarely open it, read it, and study it; instead, their copy of the Bible gathers dust as it simply sits on a table or shelf as a decorative piece in their house. To all such people, when they stand before the Lord on the Day of Judgment, He will *profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Take it to heart that whether a false Christian is a layperson or a church-leader, ALL that they do is sin in God's sight, even if some acts are civilly good, for we read in Romans 14:23, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Yes, it's as Hebrews 11:6 clearly states, "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

My friends, let us, with the help of God, cling to Christ Jesus in heart-deep faith as our personal Savior and Lord, for Holy Writ declares in no uncertain terms: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Acts 4:12; Mark 16:16)

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As we continue to ponder our sermon text, let us see what characteristics identify true Christians and false Christians.

Verses 24 & 25, ----- (Matthew 7:24-25)

Jesus here puts forth a characteristic of ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS in that THEY HEAR JESUS' WORD AND ACT IN ACCORD WITH IT! Indeed, Jesus says, as we just read: *whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

Note it well: true Christians hear Jesus' WORD and act in accord with that WORD! It's as Jesus Christ our Lord declares in John 10:27-28, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Thus, true Christians are followers of Jesus Christ, for they hear His voice, His Word, and will not listen to any other so-called

voices— such as man’s science falsely-so-called, man’s philosophies, or any other doctrines of men spun in the windmills of their own sinful minds.

In Luke 11:28 Jesus says, “blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” Yes, fellow Christians, we are truly blessed when we hear God’s Word, the pure preserved Holy Scriptures, and keep that Word in our hearts and minds, striving to live in full accord with it. Furthermore, we need to remember that God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, IS IN FACT THE LIVING WORD OF GOD, for we read in John 1:1-4 & 14, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Therefore, true Christians hear Jesus’ sayings and act in accord with those sayings, knowing that JESUS CHRIST IS HIMSELF GOD’S WORD PERSONIFIED, the ONLY WAY TO GOD AND HEAVEN, for in John 14:6 Jesus clearly states, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Accordingly, Jesus says in our sermon text: *whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.* God grant that each of us in honesty continues to confess with our lips from our heart: on Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand; Jesus is my personal Savior and Lord. After all, Ephesians 2:19-22 says to all true Christians, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Therefore, let us regularly confess, as the psalmist confesses in Psalm 118:6, “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?”

Fellow Christians, when the rains, floods and winds of troubles and afflictions come upon us in this temporal life, let us take comfort in knowing that Jesus our Savior is with us through it all, for we read in Hebrews 13:5-6, “he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

Hence, in thanks to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, true Christians strive to DO JESUS’ SAYINGS; that is, true Christians endeavor to conduct themselves in full accord with God’s Word, using the Commandments of God as a guide for holy living, rather than following the devil, the world, and their own sinful flesh. Yes, fellow Christians, we are to daily battle against the temptations of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. And, when we fall into sin, we are to repent and amend our ways, for 1 John 1:9-10 declares, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins, holding fast to Jesus Christ our Savior, who can enable us to do what is right in His sight in accord with His Word, for such is characteristic of true Christians.

Verses 26 & 27, ----- (Matthew 7:26-27)

Jesus here puts forth a characteristic of ALL FALSE CHRISTIANS in that THEY HEAR JESUS’ WORD AND DO NOT ACT IN ACCORD WITH IT! Indeed, Jesus says, as we just read: *every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

Sadly, there are people who hear God's Word, but it goes in one ear and out the other; such is the way with false Christians. False Christians do NOT take God's Word to heart and rightly act upon it! God's Law shows them their sin, while the Gospel of Christ shows them the only Savior from sin; but, they do NOT sincerely repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. No, false Christians attempt to please God by their own works, many even smearing Jesus' name on their self-devised sinful practices.

For example, some repeat the Lord's Prayer a certain number of times in a mechanical fashion, thinking that by so doing they have earned forgiveness of sins. Others take a trip to what they call 'the holy city', thinking that by so doing they earn God's favor. Others, by mere force of habit, attend a worship service, but sing hymns and utter prayers without really thinking about the Lord and His Word, and what they are doing— it's feigned worship.

Nevertheless, going through the motions of worship, or doing self-devised so-called acts of penance and the works of the Law, can never save anyone. In fact, such practices show one to be a false Christian, for Romans 3:19-28 informs us, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the

justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Accordingly, false Christians remain personally unjustified before God, because they have built their hope of eternal life on the sinking sand of their own sin-stained works— they do NOT DO what JESUS CHRIST SAYS IN HIS WORD!

My friends, when the rain, floods and winds of troubles and afflictions come upon false Christians in this life, they have NO comfort through it all, because they are without Christ; and, when false Christians must leave this life in death, their fall is great since they fall into hell, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:44)

Let us regularly pray that false Christians would spiritually wake-up while they yet have time, that they would take Jesus' WORD to heart and rightly act upon it, sincerely repenting of their sins and believing on Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

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As we ponder our sermon text to its conclusion, let us see why it behooves everyone to pay strict attention to what Jesus teaches concerning false and true Christians.

Verses 28 & 29, ----- (Matthew 7:28-29)

My friends, it behooves everyone to pay strict attention to what Jesus says, because His doctrine is 100% truth and He teaches with authority since He is true God in addition to being true Man, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."— reports Colossians 2:9.

Jesus Christ is the ONLY WAY to God and heaven! Jesus Christ is the ONLY SAVIOR of sinners! Jesus Christ has the WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE! Let us never forget that Romans 10:17 informs us, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of

God.” And, in reference to God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, John 3:36 plainly states, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us hold fast to Jesus Christ, in heart-deep faith, as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us go forward continuing in Jesus’ Word, endeavoring to do what He directs in His Word, for we know the difference between false and true Christians, as Jesus has shown us in His Word which we’ve pondered.
Amen.

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