

# Warning to Professing Christians

by Al Martin

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*Al Martin's sermon warns that mere verbal profession of faith in Christ is insufficient for salvation without genuine obedience and repentance.*

**Duration:** 1:03:26

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:13-14, Matthew 7:19, Matthew 7:21-27, Mark 8:38

**Topics:** "False Profession", "True Faith"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on a signpost from Matthew's gospel that serves as a guide to the Celestial City. The signpost is comprised of two parts: a sobering prophecy and a simple contrast. The sobering prophecy states that not everyone who professes attachment to Jesus will enter the kingdom of heaven. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding that a profession of faith is necessary for true and saving religion, but it is not enough on its own. The sermon encourages listeners to examine their own hearts and ensure that their faith is genuine and accompanied by a life of obedience to Christ's words.

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## Transcript

As I indicated this morning, we will be taking up again tonight one of those texts that I have gathered together under the title of Simple Signpost to the Celestial City. Texts which highlight fundamental gospel truths. Texts which point us to the way of life and salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And I also indicated this morning that our signpost for tonight would be taken from a section of Matthew's Gospel somewhere between Matthew 7, 13 and the end of the chapter. And were it appropriate, and did we have the time, it would be interesting to see how many of you thought that the signpost would be verses 13 and 14, or perhaps verse 14, or perhaps others thought, well, the signpost may be verse 19, following on from the theme of last Lord's Day. Others perhaps may have thought that the signpost would be this analogy that Jesus gives between the wise and the foolish man, the one who hears and does the words of Christ, thereby builds upon a rock, and the foolish who merely hears but does not do them, and is like one who builds upon the sand.

But if in your mind you thought that the signpost would be comprised of the words of verse 21, you made the right guess. For the simple signpost to the celestial city to which I direct your attention tonight is the word of our Lord Jesus in verse 21, not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Now, this particular signpost

has peculiar relevance in a place like this where there are many of you who profess a saving attachment to Jesus Christ.

For the words, Lord, Lord, are expressive of that reality. They are expressive of one claiming a saving attachment to Jesus Christ in faith and in love. And as we draw near to consider what this signpost teaches us, I want us to note as we try to analyze its contents, first, the sobering prophecy, and secondly, the simple contrast.

First of all, on this signpost is the sobering prophecy. Jesus, towards the end of that which we commonly call the Sermon on the Mount, makes a very sobering prophetic utterance that constitutes the first half of this signpost to the celestial city. And it says to everyone who passes by, not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.

And if we are to understand what Jesus is saying, we must understand that a profession of attachment to Jesus Christ is a necessary part of true and saving religion. Listen to me say those words again. A profession of attachment to Jesus Christ is a necessary part of true and saving religion.

To say to Christ, Lord, Lord, is to profess a true attachment to Him as the scriptures require men to do if they are to be saved. As surely as the Bible teaches that the ground of our salvation is to be found in the work of Jesus Christ on behalf of sinners and that work alone, it teaches with equal clarity that when a sinner has been brought to rest by faith in Christ crucified, a part of true and saving religion will be the profession of that attachment to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is made clear in such text as Romans chapter 10 verses 9 and 10.

Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Now in a book where the work of Christ is made foundational to the salvation of the sinner, where Paul goes to great pains to show that all men by nature are under the condemning power of the law, are sinfully and morally and legally dead in Adam, here he tells us that in any true and saving religion there will not only be faith in the heart unto righteousness, that is, confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, and His perfect life on behalf of sinners, and His substitutionary death undergone on behalf of sinners, there will not only be that faith in the heart unto righteousness, but there will be the confession of the mouth unto salvation.

Likewise in Matthew chapter 10, the words of our Lord Jesus in this context are equally clear that a profession of attachment to Jesus Christ is a necessary part of true and saving religion. Verse 32, everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

If we would have the Lord Jesus openly confess us to be His own in the day of judgment, we must be prepared to confess our attachment to Him in faith and love here in this life and in the context, even in a hostile environment where men may threaten us, even with death itself. This is why on the day of Pentecost, when those who were stabbed in the heart cried out, men and brethren, what shall we do? Said to the apostles, brethren, what shall we do? Peter, without in any way becoming a sacramentalist, inferring that there is some grace unto forgiveness to be found in the water of baptism, nonetheless says, repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins. And though baptism is not the meritorious ground of our forgiveness, it is an inevitable accompaniment, unless providentially hindered, it is an inevitable accompaniment of true repentance and faith which are

spiritual activities of the heart.

Open confession of Christ is a vital and indispensable part of true and saving religion. I quote without asking you to turn to it as a final witness the words of Jesus from Mark 8:38, whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory. We will never understand the sobering prophecy etched upon this simple signpost unless we understand that principle.

When Jesus said, not everyone who says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, He is assuming that we understand that the open profession of attachment to Christ is a necessary part of true and saving religion. However, the sobering prophecy in this signpost informs us that the mere profession of attachment to Christ is no proof of true and saving religion. You follow? We've established what is implicit in this sobering prophecy of Jesus when He said, not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, shall enter.

He's assuming that among true believers, saying, Lord, Lord, is indeed a part of true and saving religion. And they shall enter the kingdom of heaven in the last day. But His sobering prophecy is informing us that the mere profession of attachment to Christ is no proof of true and saving religion.

For though some, though many who say with deep and sincere religious enthusiasm, Lord, Lord, shall enter, not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, not everyone who zealously professes a saving attachment to Jesus Christ will actually enter the kingdom of heaven in the last day. Many will say, Lord, Lord, and will enter. But there will be many who will say, Lord, Lord, our profession is that of attachment to You in faith and love.

But they will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus Christ Himself has prophesied, and He is truth incarnate, and He is telling us, not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven. In fact, if we look at the very next two verses, He focuses upon a whole class of people who will say those very words right up until the day of judgment.

And yet they will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Look at the verses. Many will say to me in that day what they were saying while they were on earth.

Lord, Lord, we are attached to You. We trust You. We love You.

We believe in You. We are Your disciples. They say it to Him.

They say it to others. They say it before a group of elders. They say it before the church, by their associations, by their coming to the Lord's table.

Their language is the language in life of Lord, Lord. We are in attachment to You. And even in the day of judgment, they don't change their tune.

Many will say to me, in that day, that final day, that day that we contemplated last Lord's day, the great day of the wrath of God and of the Lamb, the day of judgment, the day when every secret thought shall be made known, the day when all hypocrisy will be unveiled for what it is. Many, many, not just a few, not one here or there, but many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, right in the day of judgment, they are openly confessing before the assembled multitudes, before the great white throne of God, Lord, Lord. They are still holding to their profession of attachment to Jesus Christ in faith and love.

And this is what they say. Did we not prophesy by Thy name? You see, their attachment to His name was such that they spoke in His name. They spoke of Him.

They spoke on His behalf. They spoke ostensibly in His authority. Did we not prophesy by Thy name? And by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many mighty works.

You see, their profession of attachment to Jesus Christ is openly and apparently persuasively protested even in the day of judgment. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord. Even though Jesus has already said, Not everyone who says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter.

There will be many who ignore this signpost, who will treat it as the stuff of a preacher just trying to upset one's religious apple cart. And they will go riding straight on their way to hell, claiming that their attachment to Christ is real. And they will even try to make it stick in the presence of Christ the Judge in the last day.

Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name? And by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many mighty works. Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. In life, you professed that you came to know Me.

You professed that by a heart experience of the work of God, you came to be attached to Me in faith and love. In life, you professed that I was yours and you were Mine. You said, Lord, Lord, and now in the day of judgment, you still hold to your claim and you say, Lord, Lord, did we not do this in the promotion and in association with your name and that in association with your name? And He does not dispute their claims in life or there in the day of judgment.

He simply says, I never knew you. It was all one way. You professed to be joined to Me, but I never professed to be joined to you.

I never knew you. Depart from Me, you that work iniquity. I say on this signpost, there is a sobering prophecy that many who actually profess attachment to Jesus Christ, some of whom have been brought into a place of actively promoting His name and His cause, will be rejected by Jesus Christ in the day of judgment with His claim, I never knew you.

Now, by way of application, let me say that in no place upon the face of the earth are people more in danger of being a fulfillment of this sobering prophecy than in this, our own country. In this, our own part of the country, in the context of Trinity Baptist Church, if to profess Christ meant for you and for me what it means for those who know about our brother in Iran, that the moment we would say by open confession, we have believed upon Christ from the heart unto salvation, we are now confessing Him with the mouth, and we are going to embody that confession in the ordinance of His institution, baptism. If we knew that the moment we did, there would be a price upon our head that we could be thrown into prison, publicly flogged, executed.

If we knew that the moment we did, there would be far fewer people sitting in this building tonight saying, Lord, Lord, far, far fewer. associations in which it actually makes you more acceptable to claim attachment to Christ, where there is on the part of some such real and vital godliness that to openly declare oneself ungodly is to pronounce a sentence of social ostracization upon oneself. There is even social pressure in our setting to say, Lord, Lord.

Because we have grown up catechized and instructed and preached to and taught at home, Sunday school, church, Christian school, home schooling, we say, what more is there to know without saying,

Lord, Lord, what more is there to be? Family training and discipline have made you respectable and upright and decent, and there is nothing that would outwardly mark you as an Esau and a profane person, and so the most natural thing is to say, well, I believe everything I've been taught and I've done everything you're supposed to do, so might as well say I'm His. My friends, if any group of people needs this text, Trinity Baptist Church needs it. Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.

Not all who profess and profess with some degree of earnestness true and saving religion truly possess it, and this will be revealed. This will be revealed in the last day. And if you fooled mom and dad, husband, wife, father, mother, pastors, elders, my friend, what good will it do when the judge says, I never knew you? Depart from me.

There never has been and there is not now any saving attachment. You have not come into the virtue of my perfect life and my substitutionary death. You are not under the canopy of my promise.

I will take you to myself that where I am, there you may be also. So depart from me. I never knew you.

That's a sobering. And the one most likely to be part of it is the one who treats it lightly. The person who is sobered by it is the one who most likely will not be part of its fulfillment.

But thank God the sobering prophecy is followed by a simple contrast. You Greek students, we have an Allah. That word that demonstrates a contrasting statement of significance is to follow, but he that is doing the will of my father who is in heaven, the words understood, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.

You see how those words are understood. Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, some of those who say, Lord, Lord, shall enter. But not all who simply say, Lord, Lord, shall enter.

Well, who shall enter the kingdom of heaven? Those who not only say, Lord, Lord, but who live in reality as though I truly were their Lord. They are doing the will of my father who is in heaven. They shall enter the kingdom of heaven in its consummate glory at the last day.

There is the simple contrast. He that is doing, present tense, the will of my father who is in heaven shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Now what is Jesus saying? Is he asserting in this contrast that no one will enter the kingdom of heaven in the last day, but human beings, men and women, boys and girls, who from the moment of their conception, their development in their mother's womb, from the moment of their first breath to their last breath, perfectly did the will of God in thought and word, desire and motive and intent, action and reaction.

No, there was only one ever conceived in a womb and brought forth on this earth who fits that description. And that is our Lord Jesus Christ conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the mysterious power of the Holy Spirit. Conceived without sin.

Passing through all the normal stages of prenatal development without any stain of original sin. Brought forth by Mary in Bethlehem's manger. Bethlehem's stall inlaid in a manger.

And throughout the entirety of that life of 33 plus years, there never was from the deepest springs where thought first originates, where motives are first formed, where attitudes are first conceived. There never was the slightest hair's breadth deviation from the perfect will of the Father in heaven to every motion of his little feet as a toddler in that home in Nazareth, to every articulation of his Aramaic as he began to speak as a little boy and say Abba to Joseph. If he used that word to speak to his earthly father in the

sense that Joseph was appointed as the guardian of Christ in the role of a father in all of the ways he addressed his parents and interacted with his siblings.

Think of it in a household full of little sinners for he was part of a large family. Never once was there even the first motion of jealousy to favor shown to his siblings. Never once a motion of sinful anger when there was injustice shown by one of his siblings.

Unfairness shown by Mary or Joseph in dealing with a family squabble in all of his interaction through every stage of his life. And here I must restrain myself for the sheer fascination of gazing upon a developing Christ growing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man into full-blown manhood. And when it says he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, he who knew no sin.

That's what it's talking about. In the totality of his humanity where motives and emotions and attitudes and dispositions and deeds and words all form the complex of what we are and do. He perfectly did the will of the father in heaven.

And the Lord here is not saying that the only one who's going to be in heaven is his son. He is not saying that. What does he mean then when he says, not everyone who says Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that is doing the will of my father who is in heaven.

Well, this is what he is saying. Not that there is any one of us who can earn heaven by a perfect performance of the will of God, for we would all be shut out. Rather, he is saying this.

The ones who will enter the kingdom of heaven are those whose professed saving attachment to Christ has brought them into a lifestyle of serious commitment to doing the will of God. That's what he's saying. Their professed attachment to Christ has brought them into the orbit of a lifestyle marked not by occasional serious yearnings and by fleeting serious intentions, but by a serious volitional commitment to do the will of the father who is in heaven.

Now, what is the will of the father in heaven? Well, in this very context, it begins with obeying the call to repentance and faith. This section of the Sermon on the Mount begins with the summons of chapter 7, verses 13 and 14, where the Lord Jesus speaks in regal grace, but with the imperative of that regal grace, enter in by the narrow gate. He commands us to get through the narrow gate.

That's a command to be converted. That's a command to repent of our sins and to believe in the gospel. What is here figuratively put under the language, enter in by the narrow gate, is put in plain blunt prose in Mark chapter 1, when it says, Jesus came preaching, saying, the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent ye and believe in the gospel. You and I do not begin to do the will of the father in heaven at any other place than at the narrow gate of true conversion, with the flesh withering acknowledgement of our utter sinfulness, our utter inability to do or be anything acceptable to God in ourselves, our deservingness of hell and damnation, turning from our sins unto God with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience, throwing the full weight of our sin-stained souls upon Christ as He is offered in the gospel. This is why the scripture tells us this is His commandment, 1 John 3, 22, that we believe in the name of His only begotten Son.

And again, God commands all men everywhere to repent. You see, in our day we see precious little true repentance and faith because this is the day of self-worth and self-esteem and self-fulfillment and self-stroking. And how can there ever be the dispositions described in the beginning of this sermon, the

character traits of all the sons and daughters of the kingdom? How can there be poverty of spirit? How can there be mourning? How can there be meekness? How can there be hungering and thirsting for righteousness? When we've convinced ourselves I'm okay and you're okay, recently someone handed me what people are told to enroll in a certain weight loss program.

And the use of the number 10 has reference to that vile movie, I only know because I read the reviews, I don't see the movies, in which a man lusts after a woman other than his wife whom he numbers in her physical perfections and proportions as a 10. On a scale from 1 to 10, you couldn't go any higher. If she had a half inch more or less here or there, anywhere from her ankles to the top of her head, she'd be a 9.5. Now listen what they are taught to say.

I am a 10. I am a person of worth, of value, of dignity. I am special and I have a special destiny.

I am important. I am interesting. I am precious.

I am priceless. I am the salt of the earth. I am the light of the world.

I can do many things well. I'm a good person. Nothing is wrong with me and nothing ever was wrong with me.

I am a 10. I see myself a 10 and one of the great joys is to have to help the people around me see their own worth and value as a 10. My friends, Jesus said, no one gets into the kingdom till he's a zero minus.

That's poverty of spirit. A publican in the temple would not so much as lift up his eyes, let alone his head, and he beats upon his breast, crying, God be merciful to me, the sinner. I'm a zero minus.

Jesus said this man went down to his house justified. The Pharisee could take this language. I am this.

I am that. I am the other. And I say in such a climate with the religion of self-worth forced upon us from every avenue that attacks the mind, I beg of you to hear the words of Christ.

Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, if your attachment to Christ has not begun on the base note reverberating through your breast that you are a vile, filthy, helpless, hell-deserving, wretched son or daughter of Adam, you know nothing of true repentance and therefore of true and saving faith. For true and saving faith is not tipping the hat to Jesus. It is not nodding the head that he did a few things that I couldn't do to help me get to heaven, but I was pretty much on my way, given what I am in myself.

Saving faith is the desperate thrust of a helpless soul upon the arms of an almighty Savior. It's clinging to Christ crucified in a death grip, saying, save me, Lord, or I perish. Who's going to heaven? Jesus said in this simple contrast, not those who simply say, Lord, Lord, who by one means or another have claimed an attachment to Jesus Christ in faith and love, but those whose claim is expressed in doing the will of the Father who is in heaven and the beginning place of doing the will of the Father.

Is coming as a helpless, hell-deserving, undone, needy sinner who owns his sin, turns from it, and throws himself into the arms of a compassionate and an almighty Savior who alone can do sinners good. But my friends hear me as clearly as the Bible says, that's how you begin to do the will of the Father. If that professed casting of yourself upon Christ is real, it will never stop there.

It will expand into a heart response to the Father's call given through the Lord Jesus to a life of universal obedience to the revealed will of God. This is why Jesus can go right on in this context after saying, not

everyone who says, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Verse 24, everyone, therefore, that hears these words of mine and doeth them.

For you see, it is in the words of Jesus that the will of the Father in heaven is made known unto us. And Jesus made it abundantly clear in every call to discipleship that if our attachment to him is real, it will be expressed in these simple words, following him. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

He describes his sheep in John chapter 10. And here I would ask you to turn to the text with me in these very clear words. John chapter 10.

Who are those for whom the Savior shed his blood, whom he joyfully owns as his flock of sheep, with all of their ignorance and vulnerability and stupidity and periodic waywardness, with all of the nettles and the burrs of their remaining sins stuck to the wool of their existence? Yet he owns them. How does he describe them? Look at John 10.27. My sheep are hearing, present tense verb, they are hearing my voice, and I know them, and they are following me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

Oh, what a place of safety is here described for his sheep. Known by him, preserved and protected by him. But my friend, listen, there are two indispensable marks of all his sheep, from the weakest to the strongest, the youngest to the oldest, the most inexperienced to the most seasoned of them.

These are the two marks of all of his sheep. Look at them. My sheep are hearing my voice.

That hearing does not mean that they simply allow my voice to fall on the outer vestibule of the ear. It means they hear with a view to receiving all that I say. Because, he then goes on to say, and they are following me.

My voice that called them when they were still burdened and bowed down and bent over with the load of unforgiving sin, and my voice came to them in the gospel, come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. My spirit that enabled them to respond to that call has given them a new heart, and my spirit now has put my fear in their hearts, so that the prevailing fundamental disposition of their hearts is to hear my voice. Not only when it calls to rest, and when it sets forth consolations and comforts, but when it calls to such things as these.

If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee, for it is better for thee to enter into life maimed than having two hands to go into hell. In this very sermon on the mount, when he is speaking of the commitment of all the sons and daughters of the kingdom to obedience to the law of God in all of its length and breadth and spirituality, touching attitudes and dispositions of the heart. If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive you.

If you say in the spirit of hatred, thou fool, you shall be in danger of hell fire. Whoso looks with a view to lust hath committed adultery already. These are the words of Jesus, and he says, My sheep hear my voice.

Not only when it calls to rest, but when it calls to mortification that has analogies in the brutal self-mutilation of cutting off one's own hand and with the other hand casting it far away, with no thought of ever rejoining it by a kind of demonic, spiritual neurosurgery and gouging out offending eyes and plucking them away. Are you hearing his voice calling you, young man, to cut off the right hand of lust indulged in

the chambers of your mind with magazines and books that you've hid from mom and dad and perhaps wife? You women, mental fantasies nurtured by your television set and your daytime soaps with their sordid, tawdry vile and filthy, adulterous late-born. Are you taking every step necessary to stop feeding your lust? Are you just occasionally have a little whimper in the closet when your conscience gets so active you can't live with it? And you whimper and cry and ask God for a little help and then you go right back with your hand and your eyeball firmly attached.

Oh yes, once in a while you take a dull paring knife and scratch your hand and occasionally you scratch around your eyeball, but you haven't begun to cut off and pluck out. You better listen to the words of Jesus. Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, shall enter, but he that does the will of my Father in heaven.

If ye by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live. If you live after the flesh, you'll die. What about in this sermon, chapter 6, where he talks about the believer's prayers and his giving and his self-denial? Are you doing the will of the Father when Jesus talks about our relationship to food and to drink and to things and to goals? Are you doing what Jesus, who speaks the words of the Father, are you doing what he says? Seek first the kingdom of God.

Are you seeking big bucks, big name, big house, big closet full of fancy clothes? I'm not asking do you have these things. I'm saying is that what your heart is set upon? Jesus said, Do not set your affection on these things. Are you taking that seriously? Come on, get honest.

In the language of contemporary teenagers, get real. Because if the day of judgment is anything, folks, it's getting real. It's getting real.

It won't do to say, well, God, you know, I tried. Can you tell God you tried? How hard did you try when all your spare time is reading the literature that feeds avarice and greed and covetousness and ambition? You tried when all your spare time is spent reading pulp novels and watching game shows instead of praying and reading some of the good books that are in our own bookstore. And if you can't buy them in our library and listening to tapes, flooding your mind with the Word of God, God will tell you, my friend, you didn't try.

You had an occasional, wispy, ephemeral, filmy-like wish. That's all you had. But my Bible says those who enter are those who do the will of the Father.

I didn't say it. Christ said it. They don't have an occasional desire and whimpering yearning to attempt, to begin, to try.

They do the will of the Father. My sheep hear my voice and they follow me. If we say we know him and keep not his commandments, we lie and we do not the truth.

But you say, Pastor, surely you're not saying we obey the will of God perfectly? No, no. Why would Jesus say, after this manner, pray ye, our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. That's our goal.

That as the angels and seraphim and cherubim and all the other creatures of heaven do the will of God with alacrity and joy and perfectly and perpetually, we pray, may your will be done in earth, starting with me, even as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. We're creatures of earth and of time, and we need sustenance if we're to do your will here on earth.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Forgive us our trespasses. Jesus assumes there won't be a day when the true sons and daughters of the kingdom don't need to pray for forgiveness.

He already covered that ground in chapter six. So whatever he says in chapter seven, he's not contradicting that. He's not saying we do the will of the Father in heaven perfectly.

It is not perfect obedience, but it is conscious, purposeful, self-denying, universal obedience. There's no area of life from the deepest recesses of motive and desire and thought to the most visible outward deeds observed by all in which our heart's desire is not to do the will of God. I read recently in Rabbi Duncan.

I often hear people say, and this is why it struck me so well, you know, Pastor, nobody's perfect. You know what Rabbi Duncan did with that little statement, nobody's perfect. This is what he said about it.

Nobody's perfect. This is the hypocrite's couch. This is the believers bed of thorn.

Nobody's perfect. That's the hypocrite's couch. He lies back.

No serious determination to do the will of God who says nobody's perfect. The true child of God. No one is perfect.

It's my bed of thorns. Wretched man that I am. I find that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

To will is present, but to perform I know not. That's the bed of thorns. Is the imperfection of your obedience your couch or your bed of thorns? Now, my friend, it can't be both.

It's one or the other. And I'm asking you, not knowing if I'll ever stand in this pulpit again, you better answer with as much honesty sitting where you sit tonight as Christ will make you answer in the day of judgment. Not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, oh, I have an attachment to Christ.

Oh, yes, very good. But not everyone who professes that shall enter the kingdom. Who will enter the kingdom? He that is doing the will of my father.

That will begins with obedience to the call to repent and to believe the gospel. But it expands into the call to universal obedience. And though it is not a perfect obedience, it is conscious, purposeful and universal.

Furthermore, it is not a legal but an evangelical obedience. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. If a man love me, he will keep my words.

What is the first requirement of the law? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul and strength. It is not a perfect obedience. No, it is not a legal obedience, but it is evangelical.

It grows out of a disposition of gratitude to God for his mercy to us in Christ. But, my friend, listen. God never last soothed the heart of any sinner and drew him to the foot of the cross.

But what the cross last soothed the sinner and bound him to Christ so that he is constrained to a life of obedience. When Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5.14, For the love of Christ not restrains me, it constrains me. It envelops me.

It ensnares. It holds. It binds me.

So much so, Paul said that to some people, they think I am out of my tree. When in my devotion to Christ I pour myself out in his service, he says, whether we are beside ourselves in the estimation of some, it is unto God. If you regard us sober, it is for your sake.

But this I know. The love of Christ constrains us because we thus judge. If one died for all, then therefore all died.

If what we were was so wretched and rotten that God could not patch it up, but had to send his Son to representatively put it to death in his cross, then surely whatever comes off that cross and into a tomb and out of that tomb into newness of life better be radically different from what went to that cross. And that's exactly what he means when he says that they, they one died for all, therefore all died that they who live should no longer henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sake died and rose again. The cross does not give us a minor shift or two with regard to a few of our ethical and moral and religious values.

The cross radically disrupts the very center and citadel of your life from self to Christ. And if the cross has not done that, you're not a Christian. My friend, face it, young or old, you're not a Christian until the cross has radically disrupted the very center and citadel of your life and brought you from a life of commitment to serve self, whether it's religious self, moral self, proud self, covetous self, lustful self, prideful self, unforgiving self.

Lazy self. It doesn't matter. What are the focal points of the reign of your self done? If you've gone to the cross in union with Christ, it's been shattered.

And you are now fundamentally purposely, though not perfectly living unto him who died for you and rose again. Well, there's the signpost, folks. And there are few things that make me ever contemplate quitting the ministry.

When I go home tonight, if God takes me safely home, I'll have those fleeting thoughts. That's all they are. Fleeting thoughts.

You know why? Because I'll lie from my bed and say, oh, God, I sought to be true to the text. I sought to be simple and clear. I sought to open my whole mind and heart and spirit and soul and body to the truth and through myself upon the altar of your service to spend and be spent in declaring the truth.

And their people go home and you'll talk about everything else you've talked about every other Lord's Day night for donkey's years and you will not have been scratched one millionth of an inch. I tell you, I think I understand what the prophet meant when he said, I've spent my strength. They have come to the birth and brought forth nothing but when dear young people.

Some of you who've begun to name the name of Christ, listen to me. You better start doing the will of Christ where it hurts or give up that profession. You start being willing to be marked as a Christian in that school, drive your stakes with regard to who your friends are going to be male or female.

And you've got no business establishing intimate friendships with ungodly people, much less romantic friendships with non-Christians. No business whatsoever. And you know it, but you're not willing to do the will of the father and cut off that right hand of a relationship begun to feel so nice.

The terms of discipleship are not watered down because you're a teenager. When I hear of Trinity Church members dropping their kids off to see PG-13 movies, the plot of which is a humorous twist on a transvestite lifestyle. Don't you see parents when you turn your kids loose to see a movie that has Robin Williams in it who has to dress up like a woman to have visiting rights to his kids because there's been a divorce? You're laughing at divorce.

You're being softened to the horribleness of a transvestite appearance. God says it is an abomination for a man to wear that which pertains to a woman, even when it's in a comic plot in a PG-13 movie. In God's name, what's wrong with you in this place? Sitting under this ministry and exposing your kids? I wonder what in the world kind of movies you watch.

When I hear the Trinity Church members got to have a good bit of booze flowing on a New Year's night like the world to have a good time, I say, oh God, what in the world am I doing in this place? And you've got to suck at the world's fountains for fulfillment. Where in the world are you? People, I'm not angry. I want you in that day when you stand with me before the judge of the world to have him say, come, you're blessed.

Come, you're blessed. I don't want to look at you standing there saying, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, I named you in earth. I named you before the elders.

I named you before the church. I named you in prayer meeting. I named you in witness.

And Lord, now, Lord, Lord, did I not this? Did I not that? I don't want to hear him say, depart from me. I never knew you. You worker of iniquity.

You never were made a doer of the will of God. You learned enough and you learned what to say properly enough to be accepted for what you professed yourself to be on earth. But now the day of judgment has come and the truth is now to be known.

I'm not laboring to make respectable reformed Baptist hypocrites who will be damned in the last day. That's not what I'm laboring for. I'm laboring to see this man taken safely to heaven and all of you with me.

Are you ready to look at that signpost and take its words at face value? Are you ready to look at it? Not try to rub out some of the letters, soften it up. Not everyone who says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that is doing the will of my father who is in heaven. If you go to hell, having looked at that signpost, these hands are clean of your blood.

Let us pray. Father, we are sobered by the words of our Lord Jesus. They're so plain that we cannot get around them, underneath them, over them.

And we don't want to. We want to be found out now, rather than to stumble deceived into hell. God, take your word today.

And will you not make it effectual to bring some to the place whereby your grace? They begin to do the will of the father in heaven, that this night they truly in spirit wrought self-loathing and conviction of sin, repent, turn from sin and self and turn unto you through the Lord Jesus and trust only in his virtue and the merits of his life and death upon the cross. Oh, Lord, may some begin to do the will of the father as they repent and believe the gospel for those our father who have thought all was well, but whom you have found out and who even now feel great discomfort. Lord, help them not to try to pull out the arrows that you have

sent into their hearts for their good.

But may they find a place to get alone and seek you out until indeed they can say by the grace of my God, I am a doer of the will of the father. Oh, Lord, bless your word. Oh, bless it.

We pray and have mercy upon us as a church. Have mercy upon me, upon each one of us, that with renewed zeal and determination, we may set our faces like Flint to do the will of our father in heaven, no matter what the cost may be. Bless your word, seal it to our hearts for Jesus' sake and for our good.

Amen.

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