

Reading: Matthew 7:13-29

Theme: Are We Known or Unknown?

On many products there are warnings about the incorrect use of an item, or that caution has to be taken or sometimes Government Health Warnings. Here in v21-23 there is a Heavenly Health Warning for the eternal well-being of our eternal souls. I feel that these verses are some of the most searching and alarming in all the Bible. They're so serious that we would be crazy, very foolish to ignore them. The Bible is described as a sharp 2-edged sword - picture it as a laser scalpel and these words have cut into my own heart and life before I ever preach them. These verses are not comfortable verses. Sadly, we know that health warnings or safety notices on items and many people just ignore them, but I urge you to pay attention to this one as it comes from the very God of heaven to people like you and me.

In this part of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is driving home what He had said and He wants all who read or hear these words to apply and work them out, not only for the lives we live, but also in the light of eternity. Jesus spoke of the **choice of directions** for our lives - either the broad road to destruction or the narrow way to life. He spoke of the **choices of influences** upon us - false prophets (woolly wolves) with corrupt fruit (fuzzy fruit) as these led to destruction (fiery finale). Now still under the choice of influences, Jesus says we are not to have the **blinding influence of self-deception** in our lives. Jesus warns us here that we can be deceiving not only other people, but ourselves so that when the Day of Judgement arrives, we will be unprepared and we will learn, discover to our horror we never belonged to Christ and have to go away from Him and heaven and go to hell. Fix in our minds that here is a heavenly soul health warning to check our life experience against.

The trouble is, none of us know exactly when we will be called to the judgement seat of Christ and the Bible's warning to be ready to

meet our God needs to be listened to and acted upon ASAP. This applies to all of us here however young or old, religious or irreligious, moral or immoral we are.

I want us to use our imagination a little bit, to imagine that our lives have ended - not a cheery thought! Now imagine we are before the great white judgement throne of heaven, we are called forward by name as an individual. There on the throne is the Lord Jesus Christ in all His awesome glory. What would we say at that time? What would we feel like? I've read of people who said that they will argue their case, they will get God to see reason, to show Him they've lived a good enough life. If anyone here feels like that, I have to tell you that will not be the case. At that time, we all will realise exactly what we are truly like as we will see almighty God's utter holiness, perfection, purity and righteousness. We will realise we cannot defend our life or lifestyle, nor our words, thoughts or desires. We will have to admit defeat before even our arguments can come out of our mouths; we will be too terrified to speak to and certainly against the great God of heaven.

Even more serious will it be for others who have been moral, religious, have done good, done amazing things who will be ready to list all they have done. These are the ones now in view here in v21-23. These ones were not openly godless, the workers of evil, those who did not believe in a god and the existence of a 'God', but those who were aware of God, even of Jesus and would say they did things on His behalf, who would claim to be Christians! This is why these verses are so alarming - **because even with such knowledge and claims, they are banished to hell.** Jesus doesn't play about here, He is blunter than a Yorkshire person as He brings this alarming warning into focus - for us all to take notice of, to examine ourselves and to make sure we truly belong to Jesus. See 3 things from these verses:

1. Evidence for the Defence.

Amazingly the Lord Jesus pictures these ones as making a defence case to justify themselves. They make many claims - as people do today. They claim correct beliefs - they say “*Lord, Lord*”. They own Jesus as Lord, acknowledge Him as King and Lord of all. They would probably know their Bibles fairly well, know of Jesus’ conception, birth, life, death and resurrection. They probably know theology and certainly tried to live moral lives. These ones would include many brought up in Christian homes and going to church for much of their lives. They would know of God and Jesus from their earliest years, perhaps always accepting that there is a God and Jesus died to save people like them. Having grown up in the church, they may have gone on youth camps, to youth groups, on weekends away with the church etc. and even may go on to be involved in a church later in life.

They could well have been those who had been moved and stirred in their emotions - “*Lord, Lord*” shows a zealous fervour. They want to let others know, want to share the good news, feeling happy or tearful in various meetings. They may even be able to speak of the wonderful works, the miracles, the things they have done. What things they did - prophecy, speaking spiritual messages, preaching, teaching, helping in Sunday school, camps, young people’s and may even have had supernatural words in their own or another language from God. They spoke and may even have been doctrinally correct - and people were amazed at them and their abilities.

They may even be able to speak of their ability to cast out demons - having such authority over evil spirits! They may point to great successes in their lives or ministries, even pointing to miracles - for they did and were involved in wonderful works. All these things were done in Jesus’ name and in the Greek and some English translations (*but not NIV*) this is emphasised as they say 3 times it was done “*in your name*”. If such ones came to our church, we could

consider ourselves honoured, privileged! Yet such a grand defence will not be sufficient for the Judge. They will be condemned! Surely then there is no hope for us if such ones are condemned? We have to realise there is hope as we understand the reasons why they were condemned. See then:

2. Evidence for the Prosecution.

The evidence for the defence may seem so neat, watertight and complete, but there is one fundamental flaw in it - in all the things they claim to know, claim to do, indeed we must say, did do, and that was they were doing so **without any personal relationship with the Lord Jesus**. They had correct beliefs, but they were just on an intellectual level only. They may have been able to quote Scripture, deal with hard questions, had read much theology. Such things are good for all, especially Christians, but if such forms the basis of our being accepted by God, they are wrong, are bad influences that blinds us to our need of trusting in the Lord Jesus personally as our own Saviour.

That is why I encourage, urge all of us here - those older, the young people, someone in the 1st time or the thousandth time, that we all look and see if we have only a head knowledge and understanding of Christian things. If we have, we need to realise our danger as we could be relying on that or on our parent's faith, having a second-hand faith and we fail to make sure we are truly God's child by having our own personal faith in the Lord Jesus.

It is not a case of our emotions being stirred - as that can be affected by our personality, our circumstances, or if we are having an up or down time, or the ability and intentions of the speaker or the atmosphere of a meeting. I'm not dismissing emotions as they can be rightly stirred in a meeting - through a hymn, a song, the sermon, but our emotions are not to be relied upon as they can be easily manipulated and prove false. There is also a carnal zeal for God. A

guy called Jehu in OT did a great service for the Lord and in His name and yet he served idols! We can have emotional highs, be really concerned about this cause or that cause - especially in God's name and yet be far away from God and deceiving ourselves that these things are for and of God.

From what Jesus says it would be possible to preach fine sermons, with true doctrine, to give great supernatural utterances and even do miracles, as well as claim all sorts of supernatural gifts and abilities. Yet with all that, such ones may not even know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. The Bible shows us such ones - in OT we read of Balaam who gave prophetic utterances and yet was without God; or King Saul - who prophesied and yet was godless; the Egyptian magicians did miracles to rival Moses' early miracles. Jesus says here that such ones could even cast out demons but that is no proof they were Christ's - Judas Iscariot did such and yet he perished without hope.

The prosecution's case is stated clearly here in v21 *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."* Tragically many - note that **"many"** in v22 will cry *"Lord, Lord..."* Even some here will try to use the arguments that we went to an evangelical church, to this or that church, we were baptised - as a child, as a teenager or adult, were a church member, and many other things and so Lord, Lord we can come in, can't we?

I've read solemn accounts of when there was the death penalty, how the judges gave the sentence, some with regret and even tears. Yet the Judge on that day will be the Lord Jesus Christ, the One we picture as gentle Jesus meek and mild, always pictured as loving and so forgiving. Yet He will say that He never knew them, perhaps never knew you and say *"away from me, you evildoers!"* Can you

imagine the horror of having those words said to you by the One who could be your Saviour now but will be your Judge then?

We are to see it's not what we do, feel or accomplish that matters. It's not what we've done, or money we gave to the church, how we've used our abilities, the service we've done in the church, not even our success or our position in the church. What will ultimately count will be our relationship with the Lord Jesus. Does He know you? Not are you religious, go to church, do good, have great success, but does the Lord Jesus know you? You might argue and say "*Of course He does - He is God and He knows everyone!*" Yes, you're right - in one sense, but the word here does not just mean *know about, or just know of or even know what makes us tick and all we've done* - for the Lord Jesus knows everything about us and so He does know us like that. The word here means a personal relationship knowledge, the knowledge of a husband and wife, and knowledge of a parent and child. It is a knowledge based on love and relationship. This is the knowledge that is needed.

Christianity is not a matter of an emotional feeling, of easy believism - put up your hand, sign a card, make a pledge or pray a prayer in a time of crisis and then you're OK. It involves us seeing how hopeless and helpless our state is before God and even despairing of any hope with God. Yet, as it dawns upon us, we will find it incredible that God has truly made a way for us to be rescued and this is by the Lord Jesus living a perfect life, dying in our place on the cross and taking all our wrong words, thoughts, desires and actions, all the guilt of such things and He took its punishment upon Himself. He swapped with you and me and died in our place and under God's judgement instead of us. It involves His life, death, resurrection and Ascension. It involves all He is and has done for us, all He will do. It means that as we see something of Him and His work for us, we go to Him as our only place of safety and of hope. We let go of our knowledge, of our morality, of our niceness, of our religiousness, of our Christian

upbringing and say with the hymn writer Augustus Toplady *“Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling; naked, come to Thee for dress; helpless, look to Thee for grace; foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Saviour, or I die.”* [MP 582:3]

It seems so easy to say, but it is not - yet at the same time it is! It is not easy to say and mean it because it means all our pride and achievements are shown to be useless, nothing but dung and worthless. Yet as we see, realise that, we may despair of any hope concerning God. But as we begin to see the wonderful, marvellous provision God has made in the Lord Jesus, yet it is still hard to think it includes us, but the Bible says it is for *“whosoever will believe”*. It is easy in another sense - because if we see our need, then we can be sure God has begun a good work in us and will not let us go until we trust in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. Another hymn writer (*Joseph Hart*) puts it like this *“Let not conscience make you linger, nor of fitness fondly dream; all the fitness He requireth, is to feel your need of Him: this He gives you; 'tis the Spirit's rising beam!”* We are to take heart that it is not so much our doing and our receiving Him, but Him working in us and receiving us - welcoming, saving, accepting, loving and knowing us.

On the Judgement Day many will put their reliance on what they've done in Jesus' name and will find out that they were never known by the Lord Jesus! Many, many more will stand there, own their worthlessness and say that their only plea is that Jesus died and lived for them, has saved them and that they are debtors to God's mercy alone. This is the only ground of confidence for that day - what Jesus has done for our souls. Do you realise this can be known by you even this day and when it is known, it will be shown that we are doing the will of our Father in heaven - as we live in obedience to what He wants us to do - as we build our lives on His word as in v24-27. Finally see:

3. The Judge's Verdict on Us?

What will it be? Will it be heaven or hell? “*Depart from Me, I never knew you*” or “*Welcome beloved of My Father?*” The verdict matters as it will determine our eternal destiny. Please, please do not go self-deluded and deceived to hell. To both young and old here, I call on you to be warned, to take Jesus’ words of warning most seriously. Make sure He does know you, make sure you have this loving relationship with Christ and live it out with joy all your life.

If you are relying upon anyone or anything else other than the Lord Jesus Christ, then you can have no grounds of hope for the future, nor assurance of eternal life and you’re building your life on sinking quagmire sand - as we will see next time.

Realise now that this could be the greatest day of your life as it could be the start of your trust in the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and all the cascade of many, many blessings and good things that He will give you - both throughout your life and for eternity.

Sadly, on the other hand, it could be the worst day of your life, as you decide to ignore Him and you go ever onward along the broad way to hell, to an eternity of God’s judgement. The Judge waits, so does the Judgement Day and we don’t know when we will appear before Him. What would the verdict be on our lives if it was to be this day? Solemn questions asked about the most serious issue. I ask you to think seriously about such things and make your peace with God through the Lord Jesus.