

I don't listen to a ton of music. I am more of an audiobook guy with an occasional podcast, but when I do I like a range of genres but one of my favorites is soul music, especially southern soul. And I like Alabama Shakes or what used to be. Their founder and lead singer recently broke off to do her own thing so I streamed it and I do not recommend it. But let me read the lyrics of a song called *He Loves Me*. Like to hear it, here it goes:

"I don't go to church anymore, I know he still loves me, I know he still loves me when I'm smoking blunts, Loves me when I'm drinking too much, He loves me then, yeah, He loves me when I do what I want, He loves me, he doesn't judge me, Yes, he loves me, I don't need to know why, 'Cause I know what love means, I don't need forgivin'." Such sad sad lyrics. Tragic. Tragically wrong according to the teaching of Jesus.

Jesus is bringing his sermon to a close and he gives us four sketches on the importance of responding rightly. Jesus has laid out two ways to live: the two gates, two trees with two different types of fruits and now we have two different professions, one true and one false, and next time we'll see two foundations. 15-23 is a unit. Last week we saw the deceivers but 21-23 are the self-deceived, from false prophets to false professors. And Jesus has another hard word for us this morning. These are the tipes of verses most churches won't touch. Whitefield said it is a poor sermon that gives no offense. This sermon will offend, but I beg you to listen to the words of Jesus. Let's consider three points: false converts, true converts, and why it matters.

I. False Converts 21-22 – What is conversion? Conversion is faith and repentance. Paul was preaching at Lystra and called his hearers to *turn* from vain things to the living God (Acts 14:15). To turn is to be converted. The Thessalonian Christians *turned* to God from idols to serve the living and true God. Turning from sin and to God. So what are false converts? In short, a false convert is someone who says they are a Christian, but they do not follow Jesus. These are people who say that Jesus is Lord but do not submit to his Lordship. They profess faith, they say they believe in Jesus, but they are not born again. Later on in Matthew Jesus will speak of the religious leaders of his day as those who honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me (15:9). They are not regenerate. And Abilene is filled with them. The Lord of the world says that a mere outward profession is useless. This was my **testimony**.

The people Jesus is talking to say he is Lord and perform wonders in his name. They profess faith and do charismatic activities and Jesus doesn't question their validity and I don't think we should either. Remember the Egyptian magicians could copy Moses and Aaron (Exod 7:12, 22). It is possible to work wonders in the name of the Lord and not know him. **24:23-25**. In Mark 9, the disciples tell Jesus that they saw someone casing out demons in his name and they tried to stop him because he was not following us (Mark 9:38-41, cf. Matt 12:27). 2 Thess 2 says that the coming of the lawless one is with all power and false signs and wonders (9-10). The book of Revelation speaks of the Beast performing great signs (Rev 13:13-14). Maybe you remember the slave girl in Acts 16 who could tell fortunes (Acts 16:16-19).

Or what about Acts 19 and the sons of Sceva. There were itinerant Jewish exorcists who started using the name of Jesus for their own advantage. The evil spirits they are trying to cast out start talking trash. I know Jesus and I have heard of Paul but who are you? And then the possessed dude puts the beat-down on these fake exorcists (Acts 19:11-20). The ESV says he "mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." There are various ways to determine the winner of a fight. The scorecard may be the determiner, the loser may tap out, like Connor McGregor and the broken shin the doc may call it, may be a TKO, a KO. But listen, when one of the fighters flees naked and wounded, we all know the winner. If you enter the fight with pants on, but leave without them, you lost bro. And everyone knew it and

all the other false wonder workers in Ephesus brought their books and burned them and extolled the Lord Jesus.

We learn here in Matt 7 that charismatic activities without righteousness is useless. They may be able to pull off some cool ministry, but at the root, they are hiding a life that is opposed to the will of God. They are actually in it for themselves. We are drawn to the spectacular. Jesus is unimpressed. People can work for him but not live under Him. Just consider all the really “popular” and “effective” ministers who have morally disqualified themselves in the last 5 years.

It reminded me of an old school Shane and Shane song called *Received*: “You whispered to Your child today, But I haven't got a minute to listen, Your child is busy with the work of God and taking Him for granted, Got a lot to do today, kingdom work's the game I play, Lord my serving You replaced me knowing You.”

These false converts defend themselves. They seek to justify themselves. Lord did we not? Lord we deserve this. These folks are not relying on grace but themselves. Back the beatitudes, there is no poverty in Spirit here. No mourning here. No meekness here. They reply with self-justification. Did *we* not? You know, sometimes people ask if you were to stand before the pearly gates and Peter asked why he should let you in, what would you say? The right answer will not have the words I, we, or my in it. If we are to gain heaven, it will not be because of anything we did. Only Christ. Christ did it.

One of the scariest parts of these verses are that they are surprised that they are cast into judgment.¹ They are false converts. Merely *Saying* you believe Jesus is Lord and doing religious stuff is no guarantee you will be saved. 2 Tim 3:5 says some have the appearance of godliness, but deny its power. Such people are to be avoided (2 Tim 3:5). The United States is filled with false converts. A. W. Tozer said, “It is my opinion that tens of thousands, if not millions, have been brought into some kind of religious experience by accepting Christ and they have not been saved.” D. James Kennedy said, “The vast majority of people who are members of churches in America today are not Christians. I say that without the slightest fear of contradiction. I base it on empirical evidence of 24 years of examining thousands of people.”

Why? Because we have miscommunicated the call to follow Jesus, like I mentioned last week. This week I came across a Babylon Bee article. The Bee is a satirical news site. The headline was “Bible Lacking Sinner's Prayer Returned For Full Refund.”² The article read: “It was really strange,” Dunsby told reporters gathered outside the Christian bookstore after she had received back her \$36.99 plus tax in full. “I searched that Bible through and through and couldn't find anything about a magic prayer I could lead people to say in order to instantly get them into the Kingdom and have them be forevermore secure in their eternal salvation no matter what their life looks like afterward.’ A LifeWay representative confirmed that the misprint may be part of a widespread issue after store associates were unable to locate a suitable replacement Bible for Dunsby, as none of the Bibles on their shelves seemed to contain the biblical sinner's prayer either. “We're facing what is possibly an unprecedented, industry-wide misprint of the Word of God,” the representative said in a brief statement to the press. “As we work diligently to locate the source of this error, let us be comforted by the words of Scripture: ‘This too shall pass.’”

You don't find that taught in Scripture. What do you find? The call to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is more accurate to say we submit to Him than we accept him. He accepts us. The church has taught

¹ It is the same in Matt 25 with the sheep and the goats – 25:41-46.

² <https://babylonbee.com/news/bible-lacking-sinners-prayer-returned-full-refund>

easy believism. Probably the motive was to gain more numbers. Whatever we can do to get more numbers. This stat is 10 years old now but there are some 16M members of SBC churches. That's members. Nowadays churches baptism numbers are way higher than their membership numbers. But on any given Sunday, there are only 6M people attending those churches. What happened to 10M people?!

We have preached a gospel of fire insurance. Just pray this prayer, say these words and you are good. You now have your get out of hell free card and now you can live however you want. We have preached what Bonhoeffer called cheap grace. The GC is not make decisions but make disciples and the next verse says teaching them to obey all that Jesus taught. We must follow Jesus. Half the time, I try to say I am a Jesus-follower rather than say "Christian." The noun "Christian" only occurs three times in Scripture. "Disciple" occurs 269 times. False converts say they are Christians but do not obey Christ.

II. True Converts 21 – True converts are those who do the will of God. Although our English translations don't bring it out every time, Jesus emphasizes doing a ton in the SOTM: **5:19, 6:1, 2, 3, 7:12, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 26.**

Doing matters to Jesus. Obedience is of utmost importance. Jesus is Lord. As such, he calls us to do what He says. The chief characteristic of a true disciple is obedience. These false converts say that Jesus is Lord, but true converts say and seek to follow Jesus as Lord. There is a difference between saying and doing. In Luke 6:46, Jesus says, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

Obedience is necessary for salvation, not as the basis of our salvation, but as its proper evidence. We must obey, not to be saved but because we are saved. It is really important for us to understand the difference between faith and works. Charles Spurgeon once said, "We are sure that no one is saved by works, but we are just as sure that no one is saved without them."

We are saved by faith not works, faith alone, but true faith is never alone. It goes public. It issues forth in good works. As Luther put it, "Oh, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. And so it is impossible for it not to do good works incessantly. It does not ask whether there are good works to do, but before the question rises, it has already done them, and is always at the doing of them." Gal 5:6: the only thing that matters is faith working through love. Saving faith is more than just intellectually agreeing. Faith is not me seeing that chair and believing that it will hold my weight. Saving faith is me putting my weight on it, sitting in it, entrusting myself to it. James also speaks of true and false faith. He calls false faith demon faith. **Ja 2:14, 17-20, 26.**

D.A. Carson writes, "It is true, of course, that no man enters the kingdom because of his obedience; but it is equally true that no man enters the kingdom of who is not obedient. It is true that men are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ; but it is equally true that God's grace in a man's life inevitably results in obedience. Any other view of grace cheapens grace, and turns it into something unrecognizable. Cheap grace preaches forgiveness without repentance, church membership without rigorous church discipline, discipleship without obedience, blessing without persecution, joy without righteousness, results without obedience. In the entire history of the church, has there ever been another generation with so many nominal Christians and so few real (i.e. obedient) ones?"³ / True converts do the will of God. They seek to obey King Jesus in all things.

³ Carson, *SOTM*, 131.

So how do we know the difference between true and false converts? False do not obey but true do. In John 15:8, Jesus says you must abide in him and this will glorify the Father “that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” How are disciples proven? They bear fruit.

Jesus says that true converts will do the will of my Father. This is the first time that Jesus has said “my Father.” Jesus is the Son of God incarnate. The will of the Father is found in the Word of God and the will of the Father is not merely heard, even admired or adored, not merely discussed or debated. It must be done (cf. 12:46-50). James 1: be doers of the word, not merely hearers, deceiving yourselves.

III. Why it Matters 23 – It matters because of eternity. Jesus tells them to depart. You evil doers. We are talking about ultimate consequences. Also notice how high a view of himself that Jesus has. He is the judge at the Last Day. Many of you probably know that Thomas Jefferson was not a Christian. He liked most of Jesus’ teaching and most of the sermon on the mount but he removed these last three verses (FDB 358). These were the only three verses he edited out because Jesus uses the 1st person in relation to final judgment. Mr. Jefferson didn’t like that, so he removed it. And if you thought Jesus was merely a good human teacher, you can see why you would remove it. Good human teachers don’t say that they themselves are the judge on the final day. As C.S. Lewis put it, that would be a lie or lunacy if not true. But if true, He is Lord. He is the one with all authority, as we have seen in this sermon. He is the one who, in Matt 5 says you have heard it said in the Law, but then says, “but I say to you.”

Their eternity is determined by their relationship to Him. So is ours. There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. And eternal judgment is being banished from *His* presence. Everything revolves around Jesus. If you haven’t trusted him, consider him. Consider your sin and his forgiveness and flee to him. As he commanded in our Text last week: enter by the narrow gate that leads to life.

For those of us who profess faith, how should we respond to such sobering words? First we must recognize that these are harsh words, they are a warning, but all of God’s warnings are his kindness. We will sternly raise our voice with the sharpest of tones when a child is about to run into the middle of the street. His warnings are his kindness. His warnings are an invitation to life. He doesn’t want us making a false confession or these verses wouldn’t be here for us.

The proper response is to examine ourselves. This is uncomfortable but even pagans realized that the unexamined life is not worth living. And God calls us to self-inquiry. 2 Cor 13:5: “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” Test yourself to see whether you are really a Christian. Examine yourself to see if you are a true or false convert. 2 Pet 1:10: “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election.” Make every effort to confirm your calling and election. Phil 2:12: work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Friends, I don’t want anyone in hear to hear these fateful words: depart from me, I never knew you. Let’s close by considering 6 ways to examine ourselves and I urge you to listen prayerfully. Jot these down. Ask yourself, where you are:

1. Do you love Jesus? Notice that is a different question that do you believe in him, or do you come to church or even do you serve in the church. Do you love him. 1 Cor 16:22: “If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come!” Are you excited about his return? In 2 Tim, Paul speaks of those who love the

Lord's appearing. Do you view death as gain because you get to be with Christ? True converts love the Lord. Do you love Jesus?

2. Do you pray? A relationship involves communion. Communication. Do you pray?

3. What is your posture toward the Word of God? A relationship involves communication. Do you talk to God and do you listen to Him through his Word? Do you read the Word? Is it your daily bread? Just a few chapters ago in Matt 4, Jesus said man does not live by bread alone but every word that comes from the mouth of God. Do you delight in God's Word? Can you relate at all to the Psalmist: your testimonies are my delight, they are my counselors, behold I long for your precepts, when I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort O Lord, your statutes have been my songs, the law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces, oh how I love your law, it is my meditation all the day, how sweet are your words to my state, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Do we read it, do we delight in it, do we obey it? 1 John 2:3: "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments." There it is. What is your posture toward God's Word?

4. Do you love the local church? Christ is the head of the body the church. You can't love Jesus without loving the church, his bride, the people he purchased with his own blood. 1 John 3:14: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death." 1 John 4:20-21: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother." Your claim to love God will be proven true or false by your love for the local church. The Christian life is the church life. Are you plugged in? Do you pray for one another? Love one another? Serve one another? Bear one another's burdens? Do you love the local church?

5. Do you give? Remember what Jesus says? **6:21**. Jesus says your giving reveals your heart. 2 Cor 9:13: "By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others." Do you give?

6. Is repentance a regular part of your life? In some ways that's the easiest way to determine who is a true or false convert. True converts are regularly repenting of their sin. Back to the beatitudes: blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn over sin. When you sin, do you hate it? Do you fight it? I know I am a Christian because I am constantly battling my sin. Non-Christians don't fight sin. They do not care. The difference between a true Christian and a non-Christian is not the presence and absence of sin. True converts repent and false converts do not. True converts take God's side against our sin. Is repentance a regular part of your life?

If your answers to these 6 questions are yes. Imperfectly, but yes I love him, I pray to him, I seek to know and submit to his Word, I give sacrificially, I love the church, I hate my sin – but you still aren't sure. You still lack assurance. Dear saint, look to Christ. M'Cheyne said for every one look at us, we should take ten looks at Christ. Jesus has open arms. He says, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (John 6:37).

Home Group Guide:

What is the Lord teaching you?

Were you a false convert before you were truly converted?

Why is merely *saying* you are a Christian insufficient?

How have churches sometimes contributed to the abundance of false converts?

How can we engage/evangelize our friends who we suspect may not be truly converted?

Have you emphasized obedience enough in your walk with Christ?