

Religion or Salvation

Living for the Lord is a good life. Living for the Lord is the best life. Thank you for joining me once again today for "It's a Good Life." In just a few moments we're going to look into the Book of Matthew Chapter 7. We're going to do a comparison today, religion without salvation. It's a very important subject. Matthew Chapter 7, we'll be looking there in just a few moments. I trust that wherever you're at if it's at all possible you'll get your Bible and you'll read along as we go through the Word of God.

Let me invite you to look at our Website today, www.LRWM.org. On the Website you'll be able to leave us a request for prayer if you have a prayer need. Why not share that with us on the Website. You can leave that request there and we'll be glad to pray with you and pray that God's will would be done in your life and for those needs that you have. Maybe you want to pray for a loved one who is unsaved, or you simply want to pray for someone that you know that God has laid on your heart, that that person is unsaved and you want us to help pray with you for that person to be saved. Or maybe you have a specific need that you'd like to share with us so we could pray with you. www.LRWM.org, if you'll go to that Website, you'll be able to leave on that Website a request for prayer. You can also download a transcript of this program, and you can also find Bible study helps on the Website, and you can also find daily readings, Bible study helps, and there are sermons and messages on there, full-length messages that you can listen to that will bless your heart.

In Matthew 7:21, it says, ***21Not 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. 22Many will say to me in that day, 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? 23And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. 24Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25And 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. 26And 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: 27And 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. 28And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: 29For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Religion and salvation are not the same thing. Religion is any system of beliefs about God and the expression of these beliefs in attitude, worship, and behavior. Salvation on the other hand is deliverance from sin and its consequences coupled with the sweet, Heaven-born assurance of oneness with God. It's knowing you're saved and on your way to Heaven.

Religion and salvation do not necessarily go together. Nicodemus, a cultured Pharisee, a teacher of religion, the embodiment of highest moral and ethical standards, came to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "**Ye must be born again,**" in John 3:7. He was a very religious man, Nicodemus was.

And then, we see the men who crucified Christ were profoundly religious, but they were lost. Paul the apostle was never more religious than

in his merciless persecution of Christians. He thought he was doing the things of God, but it was zeal without knowledge. You might want to read Romans 10:2 in connection with that. The pagan in the jungle is more deeply religious than most of us as he sacrificially seeks to appease the supposed wrath of some loveless deity. The Bible speaks of pure religion and undefiled in James 1:27 and commends this outward expression of devotion to Christ.

Then we see the Bible speaks also of religion without salvation in Matthew 7:21-23. This is talking about deceiving the soul to its eternal undoing.

Now, there are three sobering pronouncements with which the Lord Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount. And this is carried in the message.

First, to confuse religion with salvation is a common mistake. Jesus said in verse 22 of Matthew 7, *Many will say to me in that day.* Now, the nominal Christian who goes through all the motions of church activity is this person who comes to Christ as the end and says, "Lord, have we not done all of these things in your name?" And He says, "Many will say unto me in that day, they will say these things to me."

An evangelist of wide experience tells of the most surprising conversion he ever witnessed. At the conclusion of his message in a large church where he was holding meetings, he gave the usual invitation to a Christian commitment. In other words, "If you're without Jesus, won't you come forward and receive Him tonight as your Savior?"

Well, a middle-aged woman came forward in deeply emotional response. He recognized her as the president of the woman's missionary

society of the church and as president of the women's missionary union of that state. The story goes on how that he was baffled that such a prominent person in the "name of religion or Christianity" could come forward. Well, she went on to explain that she had grown up in the church. She had received baptism in her childhood, and she had been active in leadership for years, but she had never personally come to terms with Christ as the Lord of her life and Savior of her soul. She had never been born again. She had never had more than religion.

There is a great difference between religion and salvation. And as we look further into the Word of God and further into the moralist and into these people who give their excuses for religion instead of salvation, I see the moralist who formulates his own plan of salvation and stakes his destiny on the expectation of salvation without a Savior. In other words, "I'm as good as anyone else. If anyone else is going to Heaven, then I'm certainly going there because I'm a good person." Well, God says, unless you've asked Jesus into your heart, you're not going to Heaven.

The person says, "I'm already a Christian." This one says that, not realizing that a saving faith is a necessity to the response of a person to a person, the person of Jesus Christ.

And we see the person who also says, "My religion is the Golden Rule." But suppose he lives a thousand years without injury or offense to others. When all have died, there remains the Eternal One to whom he has never related himself. You can be as good as you want to to your fellow man, but unless you've received Jesus as your Savior, you're not going to Heaven.

And then that person who says, "I'm not good enough to go to Heaven and not bad enough to

go to Hell.” Well, the answer is best expressed in the words of Jesus when He said, “Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity. I never knew you.” That tells me that there is a place prepared for everyone.

Then we see the person who says, “I’ll take my chances. I live a clean life. I treat everybody right.” And you know that he’s not taking chances. He is destroying the one and only chance that he has, and that chance is a sure, perfect way, the only way to Heaven, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you ever heard someone say this? “If I go to Hell, I’ll have lots of company.” Yes, there will be many, says Jesus, who go to Hell. But when we look at that company of people, what a company it is with whom to spend eternity in that wretched abode of the doom. That cesspool of depravity with its aggregation of filthy human degenerates for whom the Holy Spirit has forever subjected to the power of the evil spirits there.

Well, to confuse religion with salvation is a dangerous mistake. Verse 21 of Matthew 7 says not everyone shall enter into the kingdom. It may blind the unbeliever to his real need. The virtuous Pharisee and the guilty publican. As we look at this, we see a person who had religion. Religion can blind the unbeliever to his real need and that publican in Luke 18:9-14 and that Pharisee. The Pharisee said, “I thank you, God, that I’m not as other men.” In other words, he was a self-righteous person. And then we read of the publican who stood over and he would not so much as lift his eyes, but he smote on his breast, and he said, “God, have mercy upon me, a sinner.”

When a person gets to that point in their life, they have passed from religion and they are very close to the One who wants to save them. “God, have mercy upon me, a sinner. Lord

Jesus, come into my heart. I can’t save myself. I’m a sinner, and I need You as my Savior.”

Well, I see something else. To confuse religion with salvation is an unnecessary mistake. In verse 21 of Matthew Chapter 7, it says, *he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* What is the will? The will of the Father is to receive His Son. “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to be called or to become the sons or the children of God. If you want to go to Heaven, then you must have salvation. If you only have religion, you’re not going to Heaven.

Religion is totally different from salvation. Salvation is a personal experience with the Lord. Salvation is saying, “Lord, come into my heart. I receive you as my Savior.” If you’ll do that today, if you’ll trust Jesus to come into your heart and receive Him. You say, “How can I do that?” Well, the Bible teaches me that the Holy Spirit of God is speaking to your heart right now, and if you will trust Jesus to come into your heart, the Bible says, *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*”

If you’ll ask Him to save you, He’ll save you right where you’re at. And if you have been saved and you’ve trusted Jesus as your Savior and you’re not living for Him today, may I invite you to bow your head and confess your sin. If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Live for God. Live for the Lord. Trust Him to take you all the way. There is no other way other than through the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Until next time, this is Doug Anderson reminding you it's a good life living for the Lord. May the Lord bless you richly is our prayer.