

evangelicals who, in theory, hold to salvation by grace alone in Jesus alone and, at the same time, find the main reason they are saved in things they have done.

Just to clarify: fruits are necessary. Good works flow from our union with Christ and are evidence that we are His children and are forgiven. But fruits cannot be the basis for our acceptance with God. If we think that we will be welcomed into heaven because of the fruit produced on this tree, we will be like those who are rejected on the Last Day. It is Christ Jesus alone who saves.

The main question we need to ask ourselves is this: "What am I going to plead on the Final Day?"

These thoughts ought to challenge us and cause us to examine what we are trusting in. Do we trust in Christ alone, or are we clinging to things we have done? It should also encourage us because if we are trusting in Christ alone, we are safe. A passage that begins by terrifying us ends by reassuring us that Jesus is enough. He is all that we need. If our confidence and boast is in Jesus alone, we don't have to fear the Final Judgment. This passage points us to the glory of Christ so that we can rest in Him and worship Him.

Jesus is supreme because He will deliver the final verdict on the Last Day for every single individual on the face of the planet. He is supreme because the basis for that verdict is whether or not you know Jesus and are known by Him. He is supreme because the verdict is either, "Dwell with Me forever", or "Go away from Me forever." Jesus is everything on the Last Day. The Last Day will be thoroughly Christ-centered, just like every other day.

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PROCLAMATION

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Prepare to Die:

Deriding All Our Deeds



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Matthew 7:21-23 is one of the most terrifying texts in the New Testament.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

The expected outcome of this text is that those who did the "mighty works" in Jesus' Name would be welcomed into the kingdom, but, in fact, the exact opposite happens. This is what makes this text so terrifying. This passage raises a couple questions. First, "What exactly was wrong with their obedience which they confessed on the Final Day of Judgment?" Second, "How do we avoid ending up like them?" As we meditate on these words of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are confronted with issues of life and death.

What's the Problem?

In attempting to explore the reason these people failed to gain entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, were rejected and entered into torment, it is important to

allow Scripture to answer the question. Jesus says that the ones who make it into the Kingdom of Heaven are those who “do the will of my Father who is in Heaven” (v. 21). This is the dividing line between those who make it and those who do not. We must understand, from a biblical perspective, what the will of the Father *is not* and what the will of the Father *is*.

Who Are Those Who Are Rejected?

First, those who are rejected named Jesus as Lord. This is what verse 21 teaches us when they cried out, “Lord, Lord.” In fact, they show a familiarity with the name of Jesus since they repeat it twice. In this sense they could be considered disciples. Obviously, they were not disciples in the fullest sense (because all true disciples go to heaven!), but just in an external way based on what they said.

Second, they also had works that accompanied their confession. In fact, they had great works! They prophesied in Jesus’ name (either predicting the future or teaching about Jesus). They cast out demons and did many mighty works, as verse 22 says. In other words, they had some impressive works.

Finally, they had the right motives. After each work they performed, they said that it was done “in your name.” These people were not Pharisees. If we look back at Matthew 6:1-18, we see that Jesus dealt with a motive problem in doing good works. This teaching would have been inspired by Pharisees, who did all good works in order to point to themselves. The ones rejected on the Final Day, in this passage, did not have that problem. They cast out demons in *Jesus’* name, not to point out the greatness of *their* name. They

labored for the glory of Christ.

All of this would lead us to conclude that these people had it! They had the right confession, they had good works, and they did it for the right reason. We would assume that they would hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into your Father’s rest.” Puzzled, we hear instead, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness,” (v. 23). We still have not answered the question, “What *is not* the will of the Father?” The importance of answering this question is demonstrated by the fact that on the Final Day, Jesus rejected these people for doing the wrong thing.

What Is *Not* Doing the Father’s Will?

Doing the will of the Father is *not* doing the best of the best works with the best motives in mind. Doing the will of the Father is not casting out demons or doing mighty works for the glory of Christ. This is the shocking element in this passage: doing the will of the Father is not doing good works in Jesus’ Name. The reason this shocks us is that our flesh is wired to try to earn its way into heaven. If we confuse *our* doings with doing the will of the *Father*, we are lost. This is the intent of Jesus’ words. This has to be the case because these people who seemingly did everything correctly are rejected on the Final Day.

If doing good works in Jesus’ name is not doing the will of the Father, what is?

What *Is* Doing the Father’s Will?

The cry that saves is not, “Lord, Lord didn’t we read our Bibles everyday?” Or, “Lord, Lord, didn’t we evangelize for the sake of Your Name.” Or, “Lord, Lord, didn’t we give our lives on the

mission field for You?” The cry that saves is, “Lord, Lord.” Period. Where do we see that in this passage?

Jesus tells us in verse 21 that the one who “does the will of my Father in Heaven” will make it into heaven. Then, in v. 23 Jesus says that the reason these people don’t make it into heaven is because *He* never knew *them*. Isn’t this a contradiction? Which one is it? Is it the ones who do the Father’s will? Or, is it the ones whom Jesus knows? How do we match up the different reasons given in verses 21 and 23?

Doing the will of the Father is being known by Jesus. When Jesus says, “knew”, He does not mean that He was intellectually aware of their existence. If this is what He meant, He knows everyone in the universe. The type of knowing that Jesus is talking about it a *relational* knowing. It is having a relationship with them. Jesus knows everyone and, yet, *knows* His sheep. He loves His sheep, He dies for His sheep, He cares for them and He *knows* them.

Therefore, doing the will of the Father is being *known* by Jesus. It is having a relationship with Him, loving Him, worshiping Him, clinging to Him, and embracing Him. Doing the will of the Father is not “doing” anything. This is radical and this is exactly what Jesus is intending for us to see. How do you do this? How do you do “being known by Jesus”? It isn’t a deed we are called to do; it is embracing Jesus alone.

We are not welcomed into the kingdom of heaven because of anything that we do, whether works of the flesh or works of the Spirit. When it comes

to producing salvation, all works are out. It doesn’t matter if they are works that God is graciously working in us because of our faith in Jesus - we call these fruits. Fruits don’t save: Jesus saves! Let’s take this fruit illustration and work it out a little more.

Jesus Christ alone is the root of salvation. When we put faith in Jesus we are grafted into this root and once we are in Him good fruits will come from us. This might be casting out demons (as it was for the Apostles) or loving our brothers and sisters at church. As John Piper has said, “Don’t confuse the fruits with the root.” What he means is, it’s Jesus that saves, not our good works done in His Name. Isn’t this exactly what the text is

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illustrating for us? Isn’t this the trap that these people fell into?

The will of the Father which must be done in order to be saved is humbly realizing that we have nothing to contribute to walking through that gate and falling on our knees before our Jesus on that Final Day. We will only say, “The dying thief rejoiced to see Your fountain in his day, and there have I, though vile as he, washed all my sins away!” O, how we will laugh at everything we have done, works in the flesh or in the Spirit, and hold fast to Jesus alone.

This is the Gospel. All works are out, except those done by Jesus on our behalf. Doing the will of the Father means not doing a thing, except hoping in Jesus. The reason I find this important to write about is because I think that there are a lot of Protestant