

What does a false convert look like

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[0:00] Well, good morning. As I was preparing for this morning, I was reading and doing some research on the Parna Research Group.

In 2020, they found that 25% of Americans were classified as practicing Christians. Furthermore, there was a group of 43% of Americans that considered themselves non-practicing Christians. I shuddered at the thought of what in the world is a non-practicing Christian? How can one place his trust in the creator and sustainer of all things, past, present, and future, and find no urge, no slight tingle, no anything, no nudge to practice Christianity?

What does that even mean? After I picked myself up off the floor from digesting that nonsense, I switched my focus to the 25% of practicing Christians.

I said, okay, let's think about this group. How can such a godless culture be comprised of 25% of practicing Christians?

[1:23] Consider where we are at today in America. Abortions are cherished treasures of the medical world, held with higher regard than newborn babies created in the image of God.

According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, 10.9% of 8th graders reported illegal drug use in 2023. 19.8% of 10th graders and 31.2% of high school seniors reported illegal drug usage.

The mainstream television shows regularly depict images that would have been deemed pornographic just a few short decades ago. Climate change is more worthy of national resources than protecting its citizens.

Gay and lesbian marriages frequent the headlines as though they merit greater rewards because of their supposed bravery. We're supposed to celebrate that.

Transgender mutilations are being performed at staggering rates among the most vulnerable in our society. Children.

[2:33] How can this nation boast 25% of the population as a practicing Christian? If those numbers are true, what are we doing? Even more so, if you look at the practicing and non-practicing, 68%, if you add those groups together, are saying that I am a Christian.

The majority in America still say they're Christian, and yet, look at where we're at. It's devastating. It's tragic. I think the unanimous position in this room would be when we look at those numbers and we say, well, not everyone that is found to be Christian by this research group is actually a Christian.

I think that would be a unanimous position here. In fact, we may even think our minds may shoot to somebody who we know, who we think, yeah, they profess to be a Christian, but yet they don't look like it.

Some Christians out there in this nation teach others how to live their best life now. Some promise healing and wealth in exchange for money.

Some make mockeries of their public prayers. Some refuse to mention sin or repentance for the sake of being inclusive, not offending the people.

[4:05] Some adopt every single point that we just discussed in the state of America. Some adopt them as their practice. I say that's the only way to show love.

You might be thinking of somebody right now. Osteen Copeland, Benny Hinn or T.D. Jace, maybe Lecrae or even Biden.

Perhaps you're thinking of a colleague that you meet at the coffee pot each morning who says they go to church on Sunday, but Monday you know how they act.

Perhaps a golf partner that you tee it up with on weekends. Perhaps even a local columnist. In our text this morning, we will be looking at people who profess to know Christ, yet realize far too late that they have been deceived.

In our text, we're going to be in Matthew chapter 7. It's in the Sermon on the Mount. And at the beginning of this, at the beginning of chapter 5, it says, seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain.

[5:17] And when he sat down, his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth and talked and said, so let's set the context here. He's teaching his disciples. His disciples are in the immediate context of this sermon that he is delivering.

However, there's a crowd just beyond them, and they are listening in. We know they are listening in, because if we fast forward to the end of the sermon, he says, and when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

So again, let's keep in mind, the immediate context of his teaching is to his 12. But there are many people listening in. The crowds.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, especially looking at chapter 7, he is describing two groups of people. A lot of people look and say, that these parables, or these stories, are talking about a strong Christian, or a radical Christian, and a nominal Christian.

But let me tell you, these are talking about a Christian, and those who are bound for hell. There is no such thing as a carnal Christian, as Paul Washer likes to say.

[6:45] We are talking about the reality of heaven and hell. Not our earthly rewards, but our eternal ones. These two groups are comprised of those who are saved, and will spend eternity, worshiping the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords, and then those who are not, and are bound for eternal damnation and hell.

I saw a poll on Facebook. It asked, what is a clear sign of a false convert? And you can imagine some of the answers.

Some serious, and some ridiculous. But a few of them, as I looked through, and saw, what are people saying? What are they looking for in a false convert?

Somebody who professes to know Christ, something that their hearts are far from them. Some of the mentions, stopping by the liquor store every day, getting a six pack, likes Joel Osteen, likes Mike Todd.

They reject church discipline. They don't want to be around other Christians. They swear, they use the names Lord in vain, or use the Lord's name in vain, and in normal conversations.

[8:04] Always wanting to challenge accepted doctrines, especially with the current, popular opposing views of the deconstructions. No fruit in their life.

Hostility towards Christ. They have not changed. They are still doing the same, acting the same, and they have no devotion to God at all. They have fake repentance. Their attitude towards sins, they will excuse it away, or look at it lightly, in order to continue in it.

Perhaps one of the most, to the point, biblical answers, by their fruits. You will know them. That's what we're seeing here, in 7, right before our passage picks up, he talks about a tree and its fruit. You can know a tree by its fruit. Right? A thorn bush will never produce an apple. I'm not a biologist or a horticulturist, but I know that much.

Right? It doesn't take rocket science to know that a good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. And that's what he's saying here. You can judge a person by their fruits.

[9:24] And then we get to our passage today. Matthew chapter 7, verse 21. We stand as we honor the reading of God's word. The word of the Lord says, 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 all the sons. That's great. Dear God, I thank you for your word. God, I pray that we would hear the words that you have for us this morning, and that we would apply them to our lives, that we would not just dance through and hear and forget.

But God, I pray, I pray that we leave here changed. God, I pray that we will not be a nominal Christian. God, I pray that this church will affect this community for good.

God, I pray that you would use us in a way to bring revival to the city of Bartlesville and the surrounding communities. God, help us.

[10:54] In our efforts. God, I just ask these things, Lord. Amen. Before we dive too far into this text, I want to tell you a group of people who I am more fearful for than any that I've mentioned so far.

You see, the person that popped into your mind as I was talking, whoever that might have been, they have someone who knows their error.

They have someone who can approach them and call them to repentance. Their gross errors in theology can be lovingly and graciously exposed.

And the individual in error has an opportunity for repentance. Forgiveness. However, my fear is for the person who attends an Orthodox church week in and week out.

They know the answers. They camouflage in with the rest of Christendom. They deceive their pastor, their friends, their families, and even themselves into thinking that they have been born again.

[12:16] As a result, no one is calling them to repentance. And they float on by through life. Then one day they will stand before the judge and it will be too late.

We see in this passage. So today, if you were thinking, man, I, I hope so-and-so hears this message, or I wish so-and-so would read this passage, and you're missing the point.

Today, I'm calling each person here in this room to examine their lives. Examine your fruits.

See if your profession is true and genuine. What we see in this passage, I see four things. I see one that Christians do not trust in a mere profession.

I see that Christians are obedient to the will of God. And I see that Christians do not depend on their good works.

[13:27] And I see that Christians are known by Christ. So point number one, Christians do not trust in a mere profession. A profession in Christ, a profession in anything, carries no water, no weight.

It cannot provide the power to save. When I was in college, I, I was playing a pick-up game of basketball. And we were, these scrawny, scraggly short kids.

And, uh, I used to be scrawny. Um, and, and in, through the doors, walks this six-foot-four kid that we've never seen before. He's holding a basketball under his right arm.

He, he looks the part. I thought, this is NOC's version of Larry Bird. Well, and he is finally gracious with his presence.

And he came up to us, and he starts talking. And he professed that he knew basketball, that he was good. And in fact, the only reason he wasn't playing in college somewhere, is because he wanted to focus on academics.

[14:32] It's the only reason. He could have been on a full-ride scholarship. So I introduced myself, and quickly selected him to my team.

However, once the rubber met the road, his profession carried no more significance, if you know what I mean. I'm still recovering from that beatdown that we took.

on that dreadful afternoon. Unfortunately, many churchgoers are in the exact same way.

They walk through the foyer, they walk through the doors, and they look the part. They may know the lingo, and they may blend in. They may even stand out as exemplary.

They may have a beautiful prayer. They may befriend the pastor. They may even serve the saints. However, when the rubber meets the road, their profession no longer carries any substantial significance.

[15:40] I believe one prevalent stumbling block for Americans today is the sinner's prayer. We look back, and we focus on a profession. And that is the foundation that we place our full trust and hope in eternal communion with God.

The sinner's prayer as we know it today seems to have been invented in the early 20th century. Not exactly biblical, now is it? Yet somehow, despite a total lack of biblical grounding, the common American Christian holds fast to a prayer he prayed and ignores the remaining aspects of his conversion.

When he is called to examine himself, he looks to a point in time where he offered some ritualistic incantation instead of looking for his fruits, as the Bible would have us do.

How is that? Biblical. How is that examining our fruits? It is clear in this text that not everyone who makes an accurate profession would be in heaven, although an accurate profession is a good thing. He says here, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Lord, or kuros, it signifies sovereign power and absolute authority.

[17:10] And these people aren't just saying, Lord, saying, Lord, Lord. They are excited about it. They talk about it often.

They sing about it. They may talk about it in your everyday conversation. They go to church. They profess that Christ is Lord. It's not just an out, like, oh no, I'm in trouble.

Let me pull it out. But they have a profession of Christ. They say, Lord, Lord. We know that's an accurate profession because inherited the text, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter, but some will.

We are to call him Lord, Lord. That is a good and right thing. He should be Lord of our lives because if we belong to him, he has purchased us with his life.

He bore our sins on Calvary. He deserves to be our Lord. We should give him everything that we have. This is not a knock to a profession.

[18:19] We must have a profession in Christ. As James has been walking through our testimonies, we should have a testimony of how God has changed us.

We should call him Lord, Lord. But it's more than that. That alone carries no water. I'm reminded of Matthew 15, 8, where he's quoting Isaiah.

He says, These people, these people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. It's one thing to say it. It's another thing to do it. In the parallel passage here, we find in Luke 6, verse 46, he says, Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?

There's the definition of an oxymoron to say, You have ultimate authority over my life, and yet I reject your commands. Even if you honor a few of them, the ones that you agree with, or the ones that you're comfortable with, or the ones that make your reputation look good, if there are others that you reject, this is a stern warning to examine, Is he Lord of your life?

I like what Charles Spurgeon says. He says, If there's any teaching in Scripture which you wish were not there, it should stick to you like a blister until you adhere to his teaching.

[19:49] Is he Lord, or is he not? As we make our profession in Christ, if you are one of those who professes to know him, do you have a profession, and is that profession solid?

Is it backed by action? Next, I see that Christians are obedient to the will of God.

We say that here in the text. Not everybody 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. Now, oftentimes, this verse is considered one of the scariest passages in the Bible.

What a scary thing for someone to hear the words to pardon me for I never knew you. For not everyone who says, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

It's terrifying. But far more terrifying is if we don't have this part. At least he tells us who is going to enter the kingdom of heaven.

[20:59] It's not just a don't do this. I remember in baseball, I'm fielding a ground ball and I miss it. They say, don't do that. Well, I know, but what do I do?

Right? I can't fix it if I don't know what to change it to. He tells us here. It's not just, yeah, not everyone's going to enter. Bye.

What hope we have. But the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. John 14, 15 says, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Charles Spurgeon says, not talking, but doing. Not loud profession, but quiet, practical godliness mends the day. This is much of what the book of James is about.

James 1, 22. But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Isn't that the very issue being addressed in this passage?

[21:59] That these people are not doing the will of God and they have deceived themselves into thinking that their profession is enough to gain entrance into heaven. Don't be like that.

Do not deceive yourself, but honestly examine yourself. If you think yourself to be a Christian, but you are not a doer of the word, you have deceived yourself.

I know a guy who went hunting one day. He was granted permission to hunt on a farmer's field. And the farmer said, just trust me. He pulled out a map and he points to this corner of the field and he says, I want you to sit on this corner. Sit at this corner and about four o'clock the deer will show up.

And so he trusts the farmer, right? The farmer owns the land. He watches the land. He knows the activity. And so he goes and he does what the farmer says.

[23:04] He goes to the very corner that he is instructed to and he sits down. However, about 3.30, he notices some deer about 500 yards away in a different part of the field.

He thought, the farmer's wrong. Right? So he begins his little army crawl using this, a small hill as his line and he crawls a long ways to try to get in range of these deer.

And then he hears a deer snort behind him right where he was sitting. A large buck walks off. Did he trust the farmer? He would say, yes, I trusted him.

But you see, there was, there's a reason that I went against what you said. There was this going on. There were deer over here. Do we trust God or do we not?

If the farmer knows what's going on on this land, how much more does God know when he is the creator and sustainer of everything? Every single aspect is under God's control.

[24:10] We can trust him. Do we? Or do we say, but God, look at this. This is hard. Do these people feel loved if I do what your word says?

Does it matter how they feel? Does it matter if they're loved? Obey the words of God. We can trust him. Our works can serve as a barometer for our faith.

James 2.18, but someone will say, you have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works and I will show you my faith. By my works. One pastor says it this way, obedience to the faith is very important to God.

God saves us by faith, not by works. But after he has saved us, he wants to talk to us about our works, about our obedience to him. I hear many people talk about believing in Jesus and they live like the devil and seem to be serving him.

My friend, saving faith makes you obedient to Jesus Christ. What do our works say about our allegiance and lordship of Christ, our allegiance to Christ and our lordship of him?

[25:30] So, if we know that the one who does the will of my father is in heaven, we need to ask ourselves, what is the will of the father?

1 Thessalonians 4.3 says, For this is the will of God for sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God, that no one transgressed and wronged his brother in this matter.

Because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you before, and then solemnly warned you, For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.

Therefore, whoever disregards this disregards not man, but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. We are to look different. We are to have works that stem from the fact that Christ saved us.

Romans 12, 1 says, I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

[26:39] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect God will use testing to refine us.

He will use testing to reveal his will to us. His primary tool for this reformation in our lives is his word. Meditate on God's word.

Cherish his word. Study his word. His word contains all that we need for life and godliness. If you are concerned about knowing the will of the Father as presented in Matthew chapter 7, I will humbly but sternly point you to the scriptures and say, spend time here.

He is faithful and he will reveal and he will reveal his will as you study in his word and you apply that word to your life. A.W. Tozer says, the Bible recognizes no faith that does not lead to obedience, nor does it recognize any obedience that does not spring from faith.

faith. The two are at opposite sides of the same coin. So we, as Christians, we do not put our trust in a mere profession, but we are obedient.

[28:11] However, we must not go too far and understand that Christians do not put their trust in their good works. Yes, we are to have them.

Yes, we are to look to them as assurances of our faith, but our trust is not in our good works. We see that right here. The appeal of these men when he says, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter.

He says, 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? Notice, the foundation of all of their appeal is on what they've done.

Christians, we have done nothing to merit eternal life with Christ. These are admittedly an impressive list of good works.

I believe that these, that the ones listed here are part of what makes this pageant so scary. You mean there are people who are prophesying and casting out demons and doing these mighty works, yet will not enter the kingdom of heaven?

[29:30] How can they do all of these things and not have the Lord? We see Balaam in Numbers prophesying concerning the Lord. In that same story, God spoke through the mouth of a donkey.

we can see that God will use whatever means he pleases. He can and Jesus, a little later in the story of Matthew, gave his disciples, Judas included, the authority to cast out demons.

It says Matthew chapter 10 verse 1, and he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal every disease and every affliction. Now, some debate whether or not Judas actually did that.

There's no record of him actually casting out a demon. But Christ gave him the authority to. He likely either did cast out a demon, or believes he did, or says he did, he would probably fall under the camp of did we not cast out demons in your name?

Did we not prophesy in your name? I think of this list also much like I think of 1 Corinthians chapter 13. It says, If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

[31:04] And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

It is hard for me to fathom someone who can do those things and not have love. love. The point of the passage is that love is so supreme. Even if this is a hypothetical situation, if all those things are done without love, it is worthless.

Much like this list, this might be a hypothetical, it might be a literal, but regardless, our takeaway is even if you did all of these things, even if all these things are to your name, they are not enough if you do not have Christ.

Spurgeon says there is a clean path to hell as well as a dirty one. You will be lost if you trust to your good works as surely as if you trust in your sins.

There is a road to perdition along the highway of morality as surely as down the slew of ice. We cannot trust in our good works.

[32:34] Isaiah proclaims that all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. 1689 says, we cannot even by our best works merit pardon of sin or eternal life from God's hand.

due to the huge disproportion between our works and the glory to come and the infinite distance between us and God. By these works we can neither benefit God nor satisfy him for the death of our former sins.

When we have done all we can, we have only done our duty and our unprofitable servants. Since our good works are good, they must proceed from his spirit and since they are performed by us, they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection that they cannot withstand the severity of God's punishment.

Your good works are worthless to married youth admitted into the kingdom of heaven. Do not place your trust in your works.

So far to have good works and we are not to trust in them, how then are we to enter the kingdom of heaven? See that the end depart from me for I never knew.

[34:09] Christians are known by God. God. I don't want to just know God. I want to be known by God. You know, I could go up to a professional athlete and say, I know you.

That doesn't mean much, right? They're not going to take me in. They're not going to take me into the dugout so I can see him just because I know who he is. Rather, if he says I know Ty Campbell, it's a little different.

Many people know who Jesus is. Satan knows who Jesus is. The demons, they know and they tremble.

Far more than many of us. But Christians don't just know God. They are known by God. Galatians 4 9, but now that you have come to know God or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world whose slaves you want to be once more?

If you are known by God, you are called to better things than to serve our sin. 1 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 3, but if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

[35:34] If you are not known by God, you hate God. regardless of what your profession says. Friendship with the world is enmity with God.

We bring nothing to the table with God. We have no pedigree that would attract him to us. We have no earthly reason he should look at us, but he does.

Being known by God gives us comfort in the dark nights of the soul. One Puritan called being known by God the full and final comfort of a believer.

Here are some truths about God knowing you. Jeremiah 12, 3, but you, O Lord, know me. You see me and test my heart toward you. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. John 10, 27. 1 Corinthians 13, 12, for now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

[36:44] The Lord knows you. You belong to him and his child. As you stray, as you go and fall into sin, because we are not perfect, he will not leave you there, but will draw you back.

I love Paul Wasser's illustration if he sees a young boy out in the middle of the streets tied up in the game, he's 12 years old. He will go and drag that boy back to his father.

He's not upset with the son. He's upset with his father because what kind of father allows his son to be in that situation? The same is true for our heavenly father.

He will not allow us to wander off in sin and stay there. Yes, we will go into sin, but he will go and he will discipline us.

He will not spare the rod towards us and he will guide us back. He is faithful to do so. I look to Psalm 1.

[37:52] The close of Psalm 1 says, the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Psalm 1 is about describing the blessed man.

It says, blessed is the man who walks not to the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

we do not delight in the law to the level that that song calls us to do.

We are incapable of doing so, but rather it points us to the blessed man, Jesus Christ, who has done this. And if we are known by God, then our trust is not in our good works, but it's in the works that he has accomplished living a sinless life, being died, buried, and resurrected, and that he is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Our only dependence, or our only hope, is in his good works, not our own. Yes, our good works are evidence of our salvation, but do not trust in your grace.

[39:15] Rather, when we're confronted with the question of, as so many evangelistic tools say, if you were to meet God and he says, why should I allow you into my heaven, if it ever starts with because I, then watch out.

It's all because of Christ. His goodness and His mercy. There was a fitting song he sang this morning, yet not I, but Christ in me.

It's nothing that I have done. He goes on in chapter 7 to describe the two houses built on sand and built on rock.

It says, everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be the wise man, who hears them and ignores them as the foolish man. Again, that foolish man is not a Christian who has a hard time on him, but a man destined for him.

Jonathan Network says, to pretend to praise Christ while living lives that mock him is like joining those who taunted him at the crucifixion and shouted, hail, king of the Jews.

[40:39] David Tozer says, to escape the error of salvation by works, we have fallen into the opposite error of salvation without obedience.

Dare we not hear the words of our Lord and Savior? A.W.

Payne says, thousands of souls who give no evidence of being born again are quite confident that Christ has saved them. That's how we get to how we live.

That's how we get to an America that 68% say they're Christians and we know where we're at. The reality is the gate is narrow.

We do not have 68% of Americans as born again Christians. and I want us to examine each of our own lives. Say, do I have fruits of salvation?

[41:51] Not to trust in, but to have assurance in my salvation that God knows me, that he has changed me, that I am a new creation in him.

God will draw you to himself. I pray that he will save you right here, right now, today.

The cornerstone, we want to influence our community. We cannot look like the world. Lord, we are called to more than that.

We must bend our lives and mold it to what scripture commands. It doesn't matter if we like it or we don't, but God says has to be the ultimate authority in our lives.

Too many Christians, professing Christians, believe that the way to reach the world is to look like them. May it not be so.

[43:05] Let's look different at our workplace. Let's look different in our homes. Let's look different than the world. We're better than that. God has called us to more than that.

I grew up in church. I knew the answers. I looked apart and received a lot of people. God graciously exposed my sin for what it was.

It was painful, but it was an act of mercy. changed me. I used to be in this group that would have said Lord, Lord, but I was so far from him.

And many people around me were so deceived they were not calling from our people. Suddenly, I'm asking you to examine yourself this morning, this afternoon.

Pray for God to search your heart and then adhere to his word. Amen.