

## #211 “Fakers”

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People fake things all the time in order to gain an advantage. For example, kids have been known to fake being sick so that they don't have to go to school. Adults have been known to stretch the truth about a used car being better than it actually is. Many have mastered fake sincerity and care, while others have mastered the art of appearing happy when they are not. In the professing church, whether we like it or not, many are fakers. They talk a good talk and can throw a few theological points around to sound learned. They might appear to be devout because they volunteer for various positions in the church to serve. They might be able to recite prayers that sound spiritually mature and pious. They might even be able to tap the emotions during a testimony to make what they are saying all the more believable. They likely confess with true believers about Jesus being Lord and God, but they are not for real, just going along with the whole church experience and lifestyle with style but no substance, with externalities but no internal realities. The Lord warned us there would be these kinds of people, but He was more interested that these who professed faith without possessing Christ would realize that for themselves.

Jesus says in Luke 6:46-49,

“Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great” (see also Matthew 7:24-27).

From the outside, walking along a beachfront, two houses could appear to be identical. However, one is built with its foundation dug into the rock, while the other merely sets upon loose, sandy ground. When a storm hits, the house with no foundation is destroyed, while the house anchored into the rock is preserved. Spiritually, each of us is likened to a house, but only some are anchored upon the Rock of Jesus Christ. Some go to church and look the part, but they have no foundation, no true confession, no true faith, and no true repentance. This is proven, then, by the fact that, though they speak of Jesus as Lord, they do not walk in obedience and do what He says. The evidence of fruit or the lack thereof is what demonstrates true saving faith or the lack thereof. The fact remains that many will profess Jesus as Lord and not really surrender to Him in saving faith. These are fakers. As Titus 1:16 says, “They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.” A true good deed is one done for Christ and by Christ working in the heart of the redeemed. Otherwise, a “good deed” is merely social service, philanthropy, or something else that

results in pride or some other fleshly gain. Only true believers can truly love (John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:7-8). The reality is that unbelievers may well be present serving in the church and attending church functions. They are not saved because their profession is empty and vain, for they deny God by their deeds. Some people err with self-righteousness, while others err in self-indulgence. Both may profess faith in Christ, but both, if they lack fruit, are faking.

In Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus speaks about fruit being necessary to prove that we are indeed changed from the inside out. Bad trees will produce bad fruit, and good trees will produce good fruit. This, He says, along with right theology, is how we can identify false teachers, those who fake loving Jesus but who instead lead God's people astray. Jesus continues in verses 21-23, saying,

“Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'”

The key determining factor of whether a person is truly a part of Christ's true church family is whether or not he or she does God's will on earth. As James says, faith without works is dead (James 2:17, 26). Those who talk about faith and who mix on faith websites and sound intelligent at Bible studies and on discussion boards may not really be saved if they have no fruit. Some even teach from the pulpit, and, like the demons, even believe in the one true God (James 2:19). *But believing and knowing something to be true is far different from turning one's life over to love and follow in obedience, worship, and devotion.* A lot of people use God's name, some more improperly and irreverently than others. Many even pray to Jesus as Lord, but they don't know Him. Their lives, by their lack of obedience in matters of the heart, bear that out. In the end, it all comes down to what is really going on in the heart and if Christ actually indwells the heart or not. If He does, change will happen, leading to the fruit of the Spirit, to obedience, and to service motivated by love and not by pride, recognition, or any other sinful ambition.

It is typically fairly easy to identify many cults and false religions given that they deny Christ as being God in the flesh. They rewrite the Bible and teach a different gospel. It is highly unlikely that they would approach Jesus by saying “Lord, Lord.” But professing evangelicals and fundamentalists do approach Jesus as Lord, but He tells us that we may not really know Him if our lives lack fruit and obedience. There are fakers out there, and the conscience, even if it is defiled, can still recognize when it fails to keep God's commands. This is why, even in the church, we must remind people of how they have fallen short of God's holy standards and how Jesus is the remedy for our sin. We need to see fruit that is evidence of the Spirit living in our hearts. True saving faith is not proven by religious externalities but by true life change with fruit born of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Jesus sees beyond the façade and looks at the heart. Those who are faking may

fool God's people, but they won't fool God. What foundation is your salvation built upon?