
Perfected in the Word Ministry

“What Are You Doing?”

Matthew 7:21-27; Matthew 16:24-27

Sunday Evening Message



Perfected in the Word Ministry

March 10, 2013

Text:

Matthew 7:21-27

²¹ Not 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.

²² Many 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?**

²³ And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**

²⁴ Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.

²⁵ And 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.

²⁶ And 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:

²⁷ And 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.

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Text:

Matthew 16:24-27

- ²⁴ Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
- ²⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.
- ²⁶ For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
- ²⁷ For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Mark 8:34-38 [*Parallel Scripture*]

- ³⁴ And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
- ³⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.
- ³⁶ For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
- ³⁷ Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
- ³⁸ Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

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Introduction:

This evening, the Lord has pressed into my spirit a sobering message for the saints, concerning the certainty of your heavenly future ~ based upon your past, current, and future work in the ministry.

Saints of God, the Lord gave me a message in 2011 to the church, entitled: “**I Must Work!**” [“**I must work** the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.” [John 9:4]] In this message, I mentioned that there comes a distinct time in our lives when we must consider the cost of our salvation: specifically, as it pertains to the edification of ourselves (in the temporal) versus the edification of our souls (those things eternal). Many of us are at the “height of our success” as it pertains to our individual jobs, personal goals, pursuits of life, family, financial successes, etc. But when we peer into the depths of that inner-man ... that which we recognize cognitively as our soul ... we must honestly report that we have “*come short of the glory of God;*” [Romans 3:23] and in no way does our spiritual growth mirror that of our secular pursuits (i.e., prowess: superior ability, skill, or strength). In the conclusion of this message, I challenged the church to take self-inventory of their spiritual walk and the work that must be done for the sake of the ministry.

Today’s poignant message serves as a stimulus to your faith for the future; thereby invoking your inner-wisdom and judgment, to consider for some (and reconsider for others) the value and building of your home eternal. The psalmist (Raymond Rasberry) penned the words to a song (1963), entitled: “***Only What You Do For Christ Will Last***” ~

You may build great cathedrals large or small,
You can build skyscrapers grand and tall,
You may conquer all the failures of the past,
But only what you do for Christ will last ‘

The message to you today, on the basis of this song, is: “**What Are You Doing?**”

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I. Don't Be Scrooged!

As a backdrop to today's lesson, how many remember the 1998 American comedy film entitled: "*Scrooged*" ~ a modernized version of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*? The film stars the comedian Bill Murray (a cynically selfish TV executive), who gets haunted by three spirits bearing lessons on Christmas Eve. Murray's character (Frank Cross) has found great success and wealth, but only by becoming cold-hearted and cruel to his fellow man.

As the story plot unfolds: when Frank Cross is given the task of heading up a live Christmas Eve broadcast of *A Christmas Carol*, his life begins to mirror the story he's producing. The decomposing corpse of his mentor (Lew Hayward) appears at his office to warn him about the error of his ways; and to announce the impending visitation of three Ghosts (*The Ghost of Christmas Past*, *The Ghost of Christmas Present*, and *The Ghost of Christmas Future*).

"Scrooged" Transcript [*Lew Hayward's Dialog with Frank Cross*]

[It's] Lew Hayward. Your old boss. Your best friend.
[I've been] dead, seven years.
Frank, you are in trouble! Big trouble!
Look at me. Look at your future.
If you don't change your ways, you're going to wind up doomed like me!
One minute, I'm on the 14th hole at Winsford [Golf Course], lining up a put.
A heart attack later, I'm a worm feast.
I had it all. I was a captain of industry ... feared by men, adored by women.
I'm warning you, Frank. Don't waste your life as I did mine.
Mankind should have been my business! Charity! Mercy! Kindness!
That should have been my business!
Don't wait. Get yourself involved.
Now it's too late for me, but it's not for you. You can be saved!
You are going to be visited by three ghosts.
Expect the first one tomorrow at noon.
This is no joke!
It's your last chance!
You can be saved!
You've got time!

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Finally, after several eye-opening visitations into his callous and self-indulged life (by the three Ghosts), Frank finally sees the error of his ways and begs for a second chance. Frank awakens back in his office, right as the live broadcast is wrapping up. The reformed Frank (after being “Scrooged” by the three Ghosts) has become a different man overnight and now treats his fellow men with kindness, generosity and compassion; gaining a reputation as a man who embodies the spirit of Christmas. The story closes with Frank delivering a monologue confirming the validity, completeness and permanence of his transformation; and reconciling with all those whom he had previously wronged.

Like this movie projects, circumstances in your life (whether on a natural or spiritual plane) can cause you to make an “about-face” ~ and change your reckless course or reckless abandonment. Thankfully, our God is a God of second chances!
“What Are You Doing?”

Urban Dictionary’s definition of “*screwed*” ~ the position that is a result of a problem or bad situation that seems impossible to solve or get out of; to be in serious trouble; a word describing something in a state of disrepair; a more subtle substitute for a more profane word (“f@*!#d”); to be doomed to misery in the near future; doomed or destined for failure; to be in the worst possible situation at the most inappropriate time; the state of having no future.

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II. **The Rich Man and Lazarus** [Luke 16:19-31]

I'm reminded of another story (although not comedic, but satirical in nature) about the relationship, in life and in death, between an unnamed rich man and a poor beggar named Lazarus. [The traditional "name" *Dives*, is not in fact a name but the word for "rich man" ~ *dives*, in the text of the Latin Bible (the Vulgate). The rich man was also given the names *Nineve* (i.e., Nineveh) and *Fineas* (i.e., Phineas) in the third and fourth centuries. The name *Lazarus* comes from the Hebrew name *Eleazar* – which means "whom God helps" or "God is my help!"]

As the story plot unfolds: "There was a certain rich man [also known as *Dives*], which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said [reminiscent of the "Scrooged" dialog], *Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.* But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." [Luke 16:19-26]

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“Then *Dives* said [reminiscent of the “*Scrooged*” testimony], *I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.* Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, *Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” [Luke 16:27-31]

In this true-life story (told by Jesus Christ), *Dives*’ callous and self-indulged life culminated in a real-life experience of being “*Scrooged.*” And although he begged for mercy in his fiery imprisonment, and though he petitioned God to allow the very one whom he tormented in life (while laying at his luxurious and well-appointed mansion), no mercy was given to *Dives* ... no second chance at life ... neither in the natural, nor in the heavenly realm! “**What Are You Doing?**”

Jesus contrasted the destinies of two persons. One died and entered a condition of blessedness; while the other died and entered one of misery. Both were presented by Jesus as entering their future condition immediately following death.

One final note to you intellectuals concerning this story ... the term “certain rich man” is derived from the Greek word “*anthropos*” (anth'-ro-pos); which means “a human being, whether male or female” (generically, to include all human individuals). So in case you women have a sense that God is prejudicial in His judgment towards a “*certain rich man*” ... He is also targeting this indictment to a “*certain rich woman!*” “*Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.*” [Acts 10:34]

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III. **What Foundation Are You Building Upon?** [Matthew 7:21-27]

In my final story, today's lesson text depicts two individual home builders. The natural application suggests that the first man was wise, and built his house upon a firm (or stable) foundation ... that of a rock. And no matter how hard it rained ... or how high the waters rose ... or how strong the winds blew ... no damage could befall this man's house ... because, as the late Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson sang, this man's house was "***Solid As A Rock!***"

In contrast, the second man was foolish, because he chose the wrong site to build his house upon. He didn't employ engineers to survey the property, in order to determine if the foundation was secure and firm. He was unaware of the potential existence of a sink hole or other intrinsic risk to his property. He was so eager to build, and so reckless and dismissive of anyone who would attempt to warn him of the error of his ways. So much so, that he ultimately built his house directly on top of a sand lot! You know the story: "**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.**"

On a broader plane, the spiritual implication and interpretation of this lesson is quite disturbing, alarming, and eye-opening. Some of us think that just because we: have been *ordained* ... *consecrated* ... *elevated* ... *bestowed upon* ... given "the right hand of fellowship" ... sent on the evangelistic field ... are able to *utter prophetic words* ... can *cast out devils* ... can *heal the sick* ... can *speak in tongues* ... have built churches ... accept preaching engagements ... or otherwise perceive that we have done *many great and wonderful works* ... that we have it made, and our place is sealed in the *Lamb's Book of Life!* [Revelation 21:27]

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But is it really? The words of Jesus record that: “**Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ... Many 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? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.***”
[Matthew 7:21-23]

Iniquity [Greek: anomia /an-om-ee'-ah] is defined as: gross injustice; a wicked act or thing (wickedness); the condition of being without law (either because of being ignorant of it; or because of violating it); contempt and violation of law.

Concerning our spiritual inheritance, Apostle Paul’s writings to the church at Galatia record: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; ¹***adultery*** [voluntary sexual relations between a married man and someone other than his wife or between a married woman and someone other than her husband], ²***fornication*** [illicit sexual intercourse], ³***uncleanness*** [in a moral sense: the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living; of impure motives], ⁴***lasciviousness*** [lewd or lustful], ⁵***idolatry*** [the worship of false gods], ⁶***witchcraft*** [sorcery, magical arts], ⁷***hatred*** [prejudiced hostility or animosity or enmity], ⁸***variance*** [disagreeable or always disputing with others], ⁹***emulations*** [envious or wanting to imitate others], ¹⁰***wrath*** [strong vengeful anger or indignation], ¹¹***strife*** [bitter sometimes violent conflict or dissension], ¹²***seditions*** [incitement of resistance to or insurrection against lawful authority], ¹³***heresies*** [adherence to a religious opinion contrary to church dogma], ¹⁴***envyings*** [resentful of others with a desire to possess what they have], ¹⁵***murders*** [the crime of unlawfully killing a person especially with malice aforethought],

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¹⁶*drunkenness* [intoxication], ¹⁷*revellings* [riotous procession of half drunken and frolicsome fellows; a drunkard], and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” [Galatians 5:19-21] “**What Are You Doing?**”

Conclusion:

Children of the Father, if you are building your eternal home with any of the materials I just mentioned, then you are building on *unstable* and *corruptible* ground; which will ultimately lead to the destruction of your heavenly home. If your Christian life consists of (or only amounts to) the personal gains of this earthly world (which is only a transitional state), and your record in heaven does not reflect a *truthfulness of service* and *faithfulness unto God*, then you are just fooling yourself! *You better check yourself, before you wreck yourself!* ~ In other words: If you don't take a look at the things you are doing, you will undoubtedly end up with some irreversible repercussions! You'll just end up being “**Scrooged!**”

Saints, I encourage you to reflect on the words of our Lord and Saviour (as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew) concerning our *Treasures in Heaven*: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” [Matthew 6:19-21]. “**For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?** For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works?” [Matthew 16:26,27] “**What Are You Doing?**”

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Saints, if your personal cathedral consists only of obtaining a high office in the church ... to fulfill your earthly desire to be recognized by men ... only to become stagnated and idle in the representation of your spiritual obligation to that office (and ultimately to the Lord); then I'm here to tell you that it won't last! If you're not pursuing ministry for the sake of Christ and His kingdom, then you are building on shaky ground!

If your building materials do not consists of the spiritual resources which serve to edify mankind ~ as your primary business, then you are building on an *unstable foundation!* Your foundation must be built on: Charity ... on Mercy ... on Kindness!

“Though I **1** *speak with the tongues* of men and of angels, and have not charity [Greek: Agape (ag-ah'-pay) ~ brotherly love, affection, good will, love, benevolence], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the **2** *gift of prophecy*, and **3** *understand all mysteries*, and all **4** *knowledge*; and though I **5** *have all faith*, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I **6** *bestow all my goods to feed the poor*, and though I **7** *give my body to be burned*, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity ¹ suffereth long, and ² is kind; charity ³ envieth not; charity ⁴ vaunteth not itself, ⁵ is not puffed up, ⁶ doth not behave itself unseemly, ⁷ seeketh not her own, ⁸ is not easily provoked, ⁹ thinketh no evil; ¹⁰ rejoiceth not in iniquity, but ¹¹ rejoiceth in the truth; ¹² beareth all things, ¹³ believeth all things, ¹⁴ hopeth all things, ¹⁵ endureth all things. Charity ¹⁶ never faileth: but whether there be **1** *prophecies*, they shall fail; whether there be **2** *tongues*, they shall cease; whether there be **3** *knowledge*, it shall vanish away ... And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” [1Corinthians 13:1-8,13] Saints, now that you've heard this message, “What Are You Going To Do?”

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Altar Call: “Only What You Do For Christ Will Last”

Benediction: May “the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, [e]stablish, strengthen, [and] settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” [1Peter 5:10]

“Only What You Do For Christ Will Last”

Raymond Rasberry

Verse 1

You may build great cathedrals large or small,
You can build skyscrapers grand and tall,
You may conquer all the failures of the past,
But only what you do for Christ will last ‘

Verse 2

You may seek earthly power and fame,
The world might be impressed by your great name,
Soon the glories of this life will all be past,
But only what you do for Christ will last.

Verse 3

Though your armies may control each hemisphere,
And your orbits out in space cause men to cheer,
Your scientific knowledge may be vast,
But only what you do for Christ will last.

Verse 4

Though your song and prayers are heard and praised by man,
They've no meaning unless you've been born again,
Sinner, heed these words, don't let this harvest pass,
For only what you do for Christ will last.

Chorus

Remember only what you do for Christ will last.
Remember only what you do for Christ will last,
Only what you do for Him will be counted at the end;
Only what you do for Christ will last.

