

The Shocking Truth About Going to Church

Nearly 1/3 of the world population claims to be Christian.

Christianity is the world's largest religion, followed by Islam, which makes up just under 1/4 of the world population.

Looking at these statistics, one would think that Christians would have reason to be encouraged and happy that over 2 billion people self-identity as Christians.

But there is one verse in Scripture that makes me wonder if this is actually such good news.

"Strive to enter through the narrow gate. For many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:24).

This verse is even more serious when viewed through the lens of these: "Enter at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many are going through it, because small is the gate and narrow is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt. 7:13-14).

Jesus is offering a solemn warning here that there are many Christians who find the narrow gate and try to get through it, but find it impossible.

Why?

Because true Christianity doesn't jive with their personal theology.

Recently, my friend Gail from 1-Minute Bible Love Notes shared an article to her Facebook page about how liberal Christians are twisting the gospel. The article is sound and speaks the

truth about how Christianity in this generation is being perverted by those who want to believe that they can accept the message of tolerance and inclusion and still be Christians.

They can accept abortion and same-sex marriage and still claim to be Christian.

As I perused the comments on that post, there were some who started their comment off with "But my God would never ..."

And perhaps that is just the problem.

They have created a god who fits their personal theology, but that god is not the God of the Bible, and their theology isn't based on biblical truth.

In fact, less than 1/4 of Christians in America believe that the Bible should be taken word-for-word (Barna Research).

In Luke 13, Jesus went on to say that at the final judgment when the door of heaven is shut, there will be many demanding entrance claiming to have known Christ.

They knew the Bible.

They attended church.

They claimed to be a Christian.

But Jesus' words here are chilling, "I tell you I don't know you, where you are from."

It's not enough to self-identify as a Christian.

It's not enough to raise your hand, signaling to the pastor that you silently prayed the prayer of salvation.

It's not enough to even pray the prayer with the pastor after the message.

In fact, it's not even enough to attend church for years, fellowshiping with other Christians, and doing all kinds of Christian things.

Entrance into heaven isn't based on a prayer, church attendance, and doing "Christian things."

Entrance into heaven is based on this one thing alone: A personal relationship with Jesus Christ that grows out of our acceptance of His sacrifice for our sins and our submission to the precepts and principles of His Word.

Salvation doesn't happen with just a prayer.

Salvation happens when we put our faith in Jesus Christ and His shed blood for our sin. This act of faith initiates the change that begins in the heart of a new believer in Christ.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your household will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

But if someone prays a prayer, but is not yet convinced that he or she is a sinner, that Jesus is the Son of God and that His blood is the final atonement for their sin, salvation has not yet occurred.

And all of the good Christian things they do and say will amount to nothing on Judgment Day.

This is my conclusion: So, while 1/3 of the world population claims to be Christian, I am left wondering just how many of those 2.1 billion people will really enter heaven.

And yet—it is not God's will that we live in cynicism and skepticism.

So, while we must conclude that there are many Christians who have yet to have a genuine experience with Jesus Christ, we must also guard our hearts against a critical attitude.

Instead, we pray.

We pray that God will awaken the church.

We pray that the eyes of those who have heard the truth and not yet received it will be opened.

We pray that there will arise a remnant in this generation that will proclaim the truth of God's Word with strong conviction and boldness.

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