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R. C. SPROUL

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LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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Chapter One

The Struggle for Assurance

There is a passage in the New Testament that I believe is one of the most terrifying in the Bible. It comes from the lips of Jesus at the end of the Sermon on the Mount.

We tend to think of the Sermon on the Mount as a positive proclamation by our Lord. After all, it is in the Sermon on the Mount that He gives the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the poor in spirit. . . . Blessed are those who mourn. . . . Blessed are the meek . . .,” and so on (Matt. 5:3–12). Because of the

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Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has a reputation as a preacher who accents the positive rather than the negative.

But we often overlook the climax of that sermon, where Jesus 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 lawlessness.’” (Matt. 7:21–23)

Here Jesus gives us a preview of the last judgment. He says that people will come to Him, addressing Him by the title “Lord.” They will say to Jesus: “Lord, we did many marvelous things in Your name. We served You; we preached in Your name; we cast out demons; we did all of these things.” Jesus says, “I will turn to these people and say, ‘Please leave.’” Not only will He say, “I don’t know you,” but, “I never knew you, you workers of lawlessness.”

What is particularly poignant about this terrifying

The Struggle for Assurance

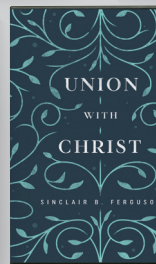
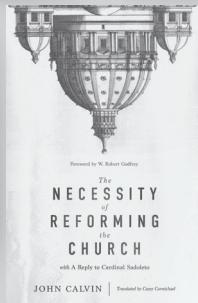
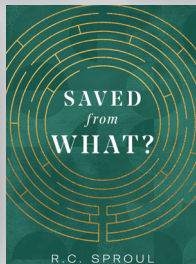
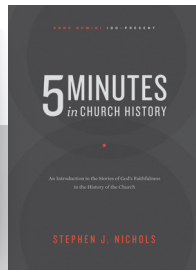
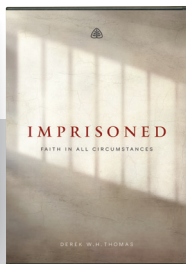
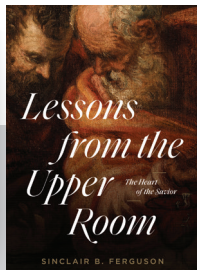
warning is that He begins by saying, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.” Then He repeats that by saying, “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord.’”

“Lord, Lord”

There are only about fifteen occurrences in all of Scripture where someone is addressed by the repetition of his or her name. Let me mention a few:

- Abraham on Mount Moriah was ready to plunge the knife into the chest of his son Isaac, and God intervened at the last second, saying to him through the angel of the Lord: “Abraham, Abraham! . . . Do not lay your hand on the boy” (Gen. 22:11–12).
- Jacob was afraid to go down into Egypt, and God came to reassure him, saying, “Jacob, Jacob” (Gen. 46:2).
- God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush at Mount Horeb, saying, “Moses, Moses!” (Ex. 3:4).
- God called to the boy Samuel in the middle of the night, saying, “Samuel! Samuel!” (1 Sam. 3:10).

We want to see men and women
around the world connect the deep truths
of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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