

A Synopsis of Missionary Paul Washer's
2002 address to the Southern Baptist
Youth Evangelism Conference,
Montgomery, AL

“How Do You Know You're Not a Counterfeit Christian?”

Synopsis by:
Mark Edward Sohmer
August, 2006
mark@sohmer.net
<http://mark.sohmer.net>

The author of this synopsis highly recommends that you listen to Washer's sermon in its entirety. You can download this sermon at: <http://www.sohmer.net/media/washer.mp3>

The following text is my notes from a powerful sermon by missionary Paul Washer. The topic was: what the Bible says about knowing if you're a counterfeit Christian, or a genuinely-saved disciple of Christ. Washer was addressing a convention of youth, but the Biblical truth he expressed easily applied to adults as well. One could truly substitute the words "youth group" with "church" and it would be just as appropriate.

We all know someone who claims to be a Christian, but isn't. What if that person is us? We must obey the scripture that says "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). It's better to find out now that we're not really saved than to find out on Judgment Day!

Paul Washer is a missionary and preacher. His website can be found at: <http://www.heartcrymissionary.com>.

Washer's text was Matthew Chapter 7:13-27:

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

15 ¶ Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

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.

Washer expressed that he was not concerned about the self esteem or happiness of the youth in attendance. He was concerned that in 100 years, many in that room would be in hell.

Washer gave some biographical information about himself, that he spends most of his time in South America, Africa, and Eastern Europe. He's noticed that American Christianity is based more on our godless culture rather than the Word of God. So many in America are deceived that because they "prayed a prayer" they are going to heaven. And tragically these false converts have no reason to doubt their salvation because so many around them who claim to be Christians are just as worldly as they are.

Washer noted that many of us:

- watch things we shouldn't on TV
- laugh about things God hates
- wear sensual clothing
- talk like the world
- walk like the world
- love the music of the world
- love so much of what's in the world

Many say, "But I'm a Christian because I prayed a prayer to ask Jesus into my heart."

Washer stated that the greatest heresy in today's evangelical church is the teaching that Jesus will definitely come into your heart if you ask Him to. He said that you'll never find that in the Bible, nor in church history until about 50 years ago.

"Salvation is by faith, and faith alone in Jesus Christ, and faith alone in Jesus Christ is preceded and followed by repentance, a turning away from sin, a hatred of the things that God hates, and a love for the things that God loves."

Washer warned the crowd not to compare themselves with others who call themselves a Christian. He told them to compare themselves with the scriptures. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Washer noted that many people consider themselves to be a Christian, but they're not concerned about going to church, not concerned about holiness, not concerned about serving, not concerned about separating themselves, not concerned for the lost, not concerned that the gospel be preached among the nations, yet they think they're saved because some evangelist told them they were saved.

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat

There is a narrow gate. There is one gate. There is one mediator. It is Jesus Christ. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The only way any human being will ever be saved is through Jesus Christ.

The state of human beings:

- "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
- radically depraved
- God hating
- never sought God
- never come to God
- rebelled
- broken every law
- The issue is not just that we have sinned, but that we have never done anything but sin. "But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

We deserve the wrath of God, the holy hatred of God.

Some say "God cannot hate because God is love," but the truth is that God must hate because He is love. If we love that which is holy, we must hate that which is unholy.

Washer observed that many of the things we love to do are the very things that God hates. We want revival but we watch TV shows that God despises, and then we wonder why the Holy Spirit has not fallen and we have to create our own false fire and false excitement.

If we're saved, then we're saved because Jesus bore our sin, and the fierce wrath of God that should have fallen on us fell upon His only begotten Son. God the Father crushed His only begotten son. "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him" (Isaiah 53:10).

Washer reminded the crowd that we go through the narrow gate by repentance and faith, not by saying a prayer to ask Jesus in your heart. And we spend the rest of our lives repenting and exercising faith.

Repentance and faith is not like a flu shot: “Oh, I did that once.” Are we continuing to repent and believe?

Not only is the gate narrow, but the path is also narrow. We cannot lead someone to Christ only to have them spend the rest of their life living like the world.

Washer insisted that there were youth present there who were practicing immorality and yet worshipping God in the same breath. They do and watch things inappropriate for Christians, yet they come to youth group believing themselves saved.

Washer noted that most of our Christianity comes from cliché’s on the back of t-shirts, or from song writers, or from the culture, and not from the Bible.

The Bible never teaches that a genuine Christian can live in continual sin and depravity.

Washer said, “We all know those who come to youth group, maybe you, who claim to be saved but inside are wicked and there is no light in them. They are not in danger of losing their reward. They’re in danger of hell. They don’t know God.”

There is both a narrow gate to heaven, and a narrow way. We must walk in the narrow way.

When we doubt our salvation, very often we’re told, “Did you pray a prayer?” but the Bible says to examine ourselves in the light of scripture.

With all the emphasis on the fact that Christians must repent from sin, Washer addressed the natural question: Do Christians sin? To answer, he cited 1 John where the Bible tells us that Christians do indeed sin. The difference is that a genuine Christian walks in the narrow path of righteousness, and if we step off that path, the Father will come for us, discipline us, and put us back on that path.

Washer said, “If you claim to have entered the narrow gate, but live like the world, you should be terribly afraid, because you do not know God.”

He said he fears for evangelists who go around telling people they’re saved, giving them false assurance because they “prayed a prayer.” Washer said, “Our job is not to tell people that they’re saved. We are to tell people how to get saved, and then God tells them if they’re saved.”

Anticipating that his message would be unpopular with some of the attendees, Washer offered the following words of wisdom: “A wise man has said, ‘your best friend is the one who tells you the most truth.’” Washer expressed his observation that in America we have become so thin-skinned that no one can rebuke us, or tell us we’re wrong. But he said that the person who loves you the most will tell you the most truth. A false prophet always tells you what you want to hear. A false prophet never prompts you to ask these questions: Is God working in my life? Am I growing in holiness? Have I truly been born again?

How do we truly know we are saved? Because someone told us? Because we prayed a prayer? Because we believe? Many people say they believe? How do we *know* we *really* believe?

The Bible teaches that we know we have been saved because our life is in a process of being changed. Our style of life ought to be one of walking on God’s path, and when we step off the path, as we all do, God comes for us and puts us back on the path. One of the greatest evidences of being truly saved is that God will not allow us to talk like our flesh wants to talk, or dress the way the world wants us to dress, act like the world, smell like the world, speak like the world, and listen to what the world listens to.

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits.

How do you know if someone is a false prophet or a genuine Christian? By their fruit!

Washer exhorted the attendees to look at their life. Look at the way they walk. Look at the way they talk. Look at the passions of their heart. Is Jesus in there somewhere, or is He just some "accessory" that they add onto their life? Or is He the center?

Washer amplified the Biblical example of the thorns and figs. Just as only a liar or a crazy person would say that you could find thorns on a fig tree or figs on a thorn tree, in the same way you would have to be a liar or crazy to say that a true disciple of Jesus could bear bad fruit.

In regard to those who constantly live like the world but constantly rededicate themselves to Christ, Washer asked, "How many times does one have to rededicate their life to Christ over and over again?" He noted that if something is a true move of God, it will last.

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.

Washer said that our profession of Christ is worth absolutely nothing. There will be many people who will profess Christ but not enter His kingdom.

Washer taught that the sign that someone is a true Christian is that they follow God's will. This is not works, but evidence of faith. Many people proclaim to have faith in Christ, but they don't have true faith. A style of life concerned about the will of the Father is evidence that your faith is real.

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?

The most important thing is not whether or not you know Jesus, but whether or not Jesus knows you.

Washer used the following illustration to underscore his point that many claim to know Christ, but it does them no good unless Christ knows them. You can't get in the White House if you say you know the President. But if the President says he knows you, then it's a different story.

Washer told the sobering truth that, according to the Bible, there are people who believe themselves to be saved, but are not saved.

"Many youth look around and say 'I look like everyone else in my youth group' but what makes you think your youth group is saved?"

Some of us think we're saved. Don't trust your thoughts. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25).

Some of us feel in our hearts that we're saved. Don't trust your heart. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

The true test is not what we think or feel. The true test is: What does the Word of God tell us?

Radical Christians are not those who wear Christian t-shirts. Radical Christians are those who bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Washer recounted the story of a young boy shot in the stomach by Muslims and left to die because he would not deny Christ, yet we in America think we're radical because we wear a t-shirt and go to a conference.

We ought to weep and come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit because we love to watch the things God hates, wear the things that God hates, act like the world, look like the world, smell like the world.

Washer's closing prayer was that we would be truly saved, and truly bear fruit, no matter where God takes us, even to our death.

Final Notes: The author of this synopsis highly recommends that you listen to Washer's sermon in its entirety. You can download this sermon at: <http://www.sohmer.net/media/washer.mp3>.

In addition, updated copies of this synopsis, as well as other helpful resources, can be found at: <http://resources.sohmer.net>.