

LOST IN CHURCH

(from the Breath of Life Series by C. D. Brooks)

transcribed and edited by Derek Morris

Note: Need flashlight

Our message tonight is “Lost in Church.” We noticed a few nights ago a strange phenomena. There are more churches in this country, more church members, more preachers, more television ministries than ever before, and yet there is also more wickedness than ever before. That ought to make you think. We come to a dangerous time, and a time of moral madness. People are doing almost anything conceivable and receiving the hospitality of the pulpit. It becomes very evident that we have far too many with a “form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” Would you say Amen?

I want to start out this evening by saying this: It’s not enough to join the church. There is no salvation in having your name written on a church role, no matter whose church it is. There is no salvation in simply being a member. Amen? The most important question, as the song puts it, is said: Is my name written there? Does God look at me and regard me as His child, His servant and His faithful witness? Am I a **real Christian**? Have I fully surrendered my life to Christ and to His will? Or am I just a nominal Christian, which means a Christian in **name only**?

Now, I want to explain to you why there is so much wickedness and at the same time there are so many religious groups and so much preaching and so much television ministry. Matthew 7:21. The Bible says, “Not everyone that saith unto Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” Now, that’s clear. Christ didn’t sugarcoat it. He didn’t beat around the bush. And by the way, Christ is my kind of preacher. He told it to the people straight. I’m not your friend unless I tell you the whole **truth**. Would you say Amen? I’m not your friend if I sugarcoat it and water it down. Jesus didn’t do that. He said, “Not everyone that saith unto Me

‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.” *It’s not enough to call Me “Lord, Lord.” There’s got to be a response in your life. Jesus says, “I’ll save you by My Grace. You can’t work your way to heaven, but as surely as you’re born, if you let Me save you by grace, you will do right. You will obey My Word. You will live for Me.* Would you say Amen? And so, “not everyone that saith unto Me ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.”

Verse 22 has more to say: “Many will say to Me in that day”--who will say to me? Many. “Many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name?’”--that’s a preacher. ““And in your name cast out Devils?””--That’s a healer. ““And in Your name do many wonderful works?”” Works of charity and philanthropy. Didn’t we visit the sick and carry meals to the aged? Didn’t we do this and didn’t we do that in Your name? “Then will I say unto them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.’” Now, that’s serious talk, and Jesus Himself said it. He was talking to religious folk, to preachers and healers and wonder workers, and He says, *you may have used My name, but **I never knew you.***

Christ saw in His day a religion filled with abstractions; people talking one thing and living another. So He speaks to the religious leaders and to the church members and to those who take great pride in belonging to the central church, and He says to them, *you can’t just be a **nominal Christian, one in name only.*** Jesus says, “Not everyone that calls Me ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” *It’s not enough to go around telling people you love Me. It’s not enough to go around using My name. It’s not enough to be a church member.*

Well, who’s going to make it, Lord?

Those that “do the will of My Father which is in heaven.” Would you say Amen?

“Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name (preacher)? And in Your name cast out devils (healer)? And in Your name do many wonderful works?”

Then Jesus will say unto them, “**I never knew you.** I don’t know you now. I didn’t know

you then. I knew you were like the barren fig tree. I knew that. You see, the preacher didn't know and the deacons didn't know, and your neighbors didn't know, **but I knew**. I knew about you. But to know you as My child? Never. There has been no such relationship."

Matthew 7:13-14. Please write it down. Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate"--what kind of gate? Have you ever looked that up in your Bible? Now, many of you think it means straight like a straight line. It doesn't mean that at all. That kind of straight is spelled S-T-R-A-I-G-H-T. But the strait in this text is spelled S-T-R-A-I-T. You should look it up in the dictionary. It means austere, difficult; it means strict. Jesus is saying, "Enter ye in at the strict gate." The strict gate.

Yet we quarrel with God. We want easy religion. We want to join the church, oh yes, but we want to be in a church where we can still keep on doing what we're doing. We want a church where we don't have to give up anything. We want a church where we can keep on sinning with the approval of the pulpit, where we can keep on drinking and smoking and the preacher will join in with us. We want a church where he will say pleasant things and talk politics and social issues and will not read to us the straight message from the Word of God. We don't want a church that is too strict.

Yet Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strict gate." Why Lord? Because "wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction and many there be that go in thereat." Because "narrow is the way and strait is the gate that leads unto life and few will there be that find it." Yes, the way to God's Kingdom is strait and narrow, and we as Christians shouldn't be surprised at that, should we? What kind of concept do you have of God? Do you see Him as a ship-shod haphazard God who winks and grins like something silly, and indulges in a cocktail now and then? Do you picture God as the irreligious character portrayed by George Burns, standing around cracking jokes with a cigar hanging out of his mouth? Is that how you see God? Oh beloved, our God is high and lifted up. Even the smallest sin is an offense to Him. Our God is the

very personification of holiness and perfection. The angels who have never sinned come into His presence with reverence. Yet we dare to joke about God! We think that we can spit in His face all week, openly disobeying Him and then make up for it on the weekend with a big offering? No way! God is not like that. Would you say Amen?

The way to hell, the way to damnation is broad and easy. If you don't want to make any sacrifice, if you don't want to give anything up, you can find a church that will let you do anything. They've even got homosexual churches now. They've got lesbian priests ordained in the ministry of what once were very conservative churches. All you have to do is read it in the papers. They'll let you do whatever you please. You want to gamble? They have churches where you can gamble every Tuesday night. But if you want to go to heaven, then that's something else. Would you say Amen out there? You may get your name on a church role somewhere, but that doesn't mean you're going to heaven. Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." Follow the strict way.

But you say, "Pastor, I'm weak." Sure you are, but He is strong.

You say, "I can't make it." But He can.

Jesus said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door I will come in and sup with him and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20). Christ says I'm coming into your life. Or as Paul expressed it: "Christ in me, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

When Jesus is in your life, and when you are filled with His Holy Spirit, you can live right. You can gain the victory. (We read it in our Bible marking class last night). Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things"--how much? All Things. How? "Through Christ which strengtheneth me." Let's say Amen.

If God can't give you the victory, if God can't give you the power to stop smoking, or to stop running around, He ought to get off His throne; we ought to close all these churches and all go to hell. For if God cannot give us victory over sin, then He's not what He says He is. But

you've got to want the victory. Christ won't force it on us. He won't even force us to be saved. That's not God's way. We are free to go to hell if we want to. God won't force us to gain the victory. We've got to want it. "Ask, and ye shall receive. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and the door shall be opened unto you." If you're willing, just give your life over to Christ, and let Him carry your burdens.

I remember when I was a little boy we used to have chores to do around the house. Now, I have a brother who is two years older than I am. We used to work together. Whenever we had something heavy to carry he would get on one side and I'd get on the other. But it always seemed like he'd reach in toward the middle of the box, and he'd always lift it a little higher than I could. I could never figure out why everything seemed so light when we were working together until one time my foot slipped while we were walking with a box, and I lost my grip, and he just kept on going as if nothing had happened. **He** was bearing the load.

Friends, when you join up with Jesus He says to you, "Take My yoke upon you. Let Me bear your burdens." He takes the weight. Would you say Amen? We read last night that He will never give you more than you are able to bear. That's the kind of Savior we're talking about tonight. There is victory through Christ. There is power with God. You don't have to be a slave to sin or to evil habits. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

The sad truth is that there are many who don't want victory. They want to continue in their sin. They want compromise. They want to carry on the way they always were, as long as their names are on roles of a church. But Ladies and Gentlemen, such people are **lost in church**. They might as well not be there. They might as well stop fooling themselves, fooling other people, because **you can't fool God!** Would you say Amen?

The Bible says in Luke 6:46, "Why call ye me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things I say?" Did you get that? Luke 6:46. If I were you, I'd write that down. Jesus says, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord' and not do the things I say?" You're wasting your time. And yet people do it all

the time. You listen to them talk and it sounds so good. I told you the other night that deception is the co-mingling of truth and error. Now, the Lord won't deceive us. All He has is the truth. Sometimes the truth is so clear and so sharp that it makes us squirm in our seats, but that's all the Lord has.

The Lord comes straight ahead and He says, "Why call ye Me, 'Lord, Lord' and not do the things I say?" Jesus says, "If you call Me, 'Lord' it means that you're willing to follow Me and obey Me. But if you're not going to follow me, don't call Me Lord." You're wasting your breath! Amen?

There ought to be a difference in your life when you give yourself fully to Christ. Folks ought to expect a difference in you. Otherwise you shouldn't use the Lord's name. People who have never professed to follow Christ ought to see a difference in you. But more than that: you ought to be looking for a difference in yourself. If I gave my heart to the Lord and served Him and year after year I was no better off than when I first started, I would know something was wrong with me.

Why, I even talked to fellow preachers who smoke and drink and live just like the world. A young seminarian preparing to enter the ministry of a large church once said, "Why, our professors tell us that there are some things that a human can't help doing. Therefore you shouldn't worry about it. Just do it and throw it out of your mind."

I said, "But what does the Bible say?"

And he replied, "The Bible? We don't use any Bible where I go."

"Well, what are you studying?"

And he began to name off the great theologians and philosophers, and deep in my heart I cried out, *Are these the people that are going out to a dying world, and stand up and represent the Lord? Are we going to have more men saying, 'There are some things you can't help doing?'*

He said, “A man can’t help having women.”

Well, I believe he can! God can keep you if you want to be kept.

The Bible says in Titus 2:11-12, “For the grace of God that bringeth all men to repentance hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly righteously and godly in this present world.” Friends, I want to be one of those saints that goes marching in the heavenly city, but I want to tell you, God calls you to be a saint right here in Pennsylvania or you’re not going anywhere! That’s the truth. Do you want me to tell you something other than the truth? God said we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

But Lord, you don’t know how wicked this world is.

Oh yes, He does! Jesus grew up in Nazareth. A rough town on the trade route north. It had such a bad reputation that Nathaniel said, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Jesus grew up in a town so rotten that He heard the cursing of profane men, smelled the odor of liquor twenty-four hours a day, saw the harlots on the street. And yet in the midst of all the wickedness He grew up as pure as a lily. He lived right before God, and by the power of God **you** can live right here in the valley. Would you say Amen?

In the tiny book of Jude, right before Revelation, verse 24, the Bible says, “Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling...be glory.” Our God is able. Would you say Amen? I wouldn’t want to serve a God who just tried. Our God is able. In the years of my ministry the Lord has allowed me to baptize many people, and some of them I didn’t feel sure about! I took their word when they said, “I’m ready.” And I’ve seen God transform lives. Our God is able! I’ve seen drunkards break their bottle and walk sober before God. I’ve seen thoughtless men changed into caring husbands. So don’t tell me you can’t make it. Yes, you can! You can do all things through Christ. Would you say Amen?

But you’ve got to make up your mind. You’ve got to make the decision that you’re going

to listen to God's Word and do His will. Jesus says, *When you make that decision, My sheep will hear My voice. My sheep are going to hear, read, study, pray and make a commitment. I've got some of My sheep in this valley.* That's what the Lord said to me. If He hadn't told me that, I wouldn't be here. The Lord told me to preach a straight message that you might be without excuse. He said to me, *There are men and women everywhere throughout the breadth of the land and who will do right when they know right.* Somebody here is going to heaven, am I right? Somebody wants to do God's will. And so God says, *Since there are people like that, then you tell them what My will is, and you tell them straight. And don't worry about those squirming, bucking hypocrites, those goats who always butt: the **sheep** will hear My voice and follow Me.* Would you say Amen?

When you've made up your mind that you're going to live for God, that you're going to do His will, **you've got to pray**. The Bible says, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). If you don't want to join the church and still be lost, you need to learn how to pray. You've got to have a speaking acquaintance with the Lord. Show me a backslider, and I'll show you a man who's not praying. Show me someone who's always stumbling and falling, I'll show you someone who's not praying. Prayer is essential. If you're not sure about the power of prayer, it's because you don't pray. Prayer has divided the sea. Prayer brought water out of solid rock. Prayer cooled off Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. Prayer locked the lion's mouths so they couldn't destroy Daniel. Would you say Amen out there?

Prayer has stopped the Devil in his tracks. Prayer has sobered drunkards. Prayer has made adulterers walk straight. Prayer has confounded atheists. Prayer has raised the dead. Prayer is the power-line of the Christian. You want victory? Pray in faith, nothing wavering. He says, "Ask and you shall receive." And the Lord doesn't just start out helping you and then leave you to fend for yourself. Not my Jesus. The Bible says in Phillipians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing"--being what, beloved? Confident. That means sure! "that He which hath begun a good

work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” He’ll take you **all the way**, if only you’re willing.

I want you to use your imagination for moment. I want you imagine that this building is going to explode, and kill everybody in it. Now, just imagine that. Now, I want you to imagine that God spoke to you and God said to you, *That preacher up there can show you the way out. Just follow him.* With all these lights on you wouldn’t have any trouble following me, would you? Now you notice something is happening. **The lights are going out.** And yet if God said, *Follow that man. He’ll show you the way out,* you could see me and follow, couldn’t you? Now I’m going to turn this light out. There’s just a little light up here now. But you can still see me. Ladies and Gentlemen, make no mistake about it, if your life depended on it, with just that much light you could make it, couldn’t you? All you’ve got to do is follow the light. Would you say Amen?

But you say, *Preacher, I don’t know everything yet!* Do what you know. Follow what you know to be God’s will. Walk in the light as you receive the light, and God will give you more light. Already out here, God has given you enough light to save you. But you’ve got to walk in it. Would you say Amen?

Some folk come out just because they like to hear me talk. It’s not the man; it’s the message. Would you say Amen? We don’t want anyone to follow us. All we want is that you will follow the light. All we want for you is that you would be saved in God’s kingdom. That’s our desire. But you’ve got to make a commitment to follow the light. And that’s a daily commitment. It’s a daily decision to give Christ full control and be filled with His Spirit. The Apostle Paul said, “I die daily.” Paul had some habits he had to put on the cross. Paul had some ideas he had to put on the cross. He said in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me.” That’s the secret! Full surrender to Christ and to His will.

The Bible says in 1 John 2:6, “He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked.” No point in going to church without that. We’ll be lost. We’ve got to make that full surrender and be willing to walk even as Jesus walked. Would you say Amen?

I want to give you a word of testimony in closing. All in my life that I cherish is mine because I decided to serve the Lord. I have a life with meaning, a beautiful Christian wife, a home where Jesus dwells, and the greatest work ever given to man. It’s a joy to walk with Jesus. As the old song goes, “It is no secret what God can do. That He has done for me, He’ll do for you.” All you have to do is surrender, and let Him.

I’ve got a serious appeal tonight. I don’t believe anybody here wants to be lost. Am I right? I don’t believe you’re coming here night after night just to be entertained. Am I right? I believe the Lord led you here. If you believe that, would you say Amen? He led you here so that you could hear the truth of His Word and so that you could make an intelligent choice for Him. He led you out here so that you could make a choice between light and darkness, so that you could make a choice between truth and error.

Jesus is calling for you to make a full surrender to Him, to follow Him all the way, to walk in the light you have seen. The Lord said to me, *There are some who are willing to follow Me all the way*. If that’s you tonight, I want to ask you to stand with me as we pray. Let’s talk to a God who’s more interested in saving you than even you are about being saved. Let’s talk to a God who will take all kinds of sorry people and love them, and make something out of them.

Blessed Lord. Thank You for the truth of Your Word. We confess Lord, that sometimes because we’ve been led so far from Your standard, Your Word seems almost strange. If we didn’t see it in our own Bibles, we couldn’t believe. Yet it’s been in our Bibles all along. It’s not Your fault that men haven’t taught it. Now that You’re bringing the light of Your Word to us, Lord, listen to me tonight in mercy. My request is that You would simply give us tender hearts. Help us to believe Your Word. Break through, break through in mercy. Some of us are so bound

by habits that we can hardly believe that you can set us free. Have mercy upon us, O Lord. Take us safely to our homes and may angels guard our sleep, but may the Holy Spirit speak to our minds until we make a full surrender. This is my humble prayer. In the name of Jesus.