

## Challenging a Profession of Faith (Matthew 7:15-23)



I heard a well-known preacher say, "**We should never question a person's profession of faith.**" This notion is refuted by numerous Bible passages which speak of false profession. What a person claims with his **lips** can be clearly contradicted by his **life** (see Matt. 3:7-12; 7:15-23; John 8:39; 2 Tim. 2:19; Tit. 1:16; James 2:14-26; 1 John 2:4,9-11). If I were to approach someone out of heartfelt concern, saying, "My friend, do you really know Christ as your Saviour? I know you *claim* to be a Christian, but you don't seem to show it by the way you live. If a tree claims to be an apple tree, should we not expect to see some apples?" I might be rebuked by some for challenging my friend's profession because they assume this could be detrimental to his assurance of salvation.

Let's assume my friend was truly saved but had not given much outward evidence of salvation due to a carnal lifestyle. By challenging him, what eternal harm have I done to his soul? He's saved *whether I believe it or not*. Yet, my words of concern might help him to examine his own heart and see the need not only to **say** that he is saved, but also to **show** that he is saved by works which spring from genuine faith (James 2:18).

On the other hand, suppose this professing Christian had never truly been born again. By failing to challenge him, what eternal harm would I be doing to his soul? Great harm indeed! By showing no concern, I would be encouraging a false profession of faith. How terrible that someday this person will hear Christ's words, "**I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity**" (Matt. 7:23). It is better to wrongly think a person is unsaved than to give an unsaved person false assurance based on a questionable profession.

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