

True and False Conversion

Tonight I want, by the grace of God, to share with you a teaching called "True and False Conversion." A very sobering teaching, and a teaching that I believe is most necessary within the contemporary church.

I have a teaching called "Hell's Best Kept Secret" which deals with the use of the Law in evangelism. In fact, God's Law, the Ten Commandments, was the essence of the gospel proclamation of Wesley, Moody, Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, all these men that God so greatly used. They said that if you don't use the Law, you'll almost certainly lead to false conversions.

I was reading in the American Horizons magazine, which is the official magazine of a very large, or a major, denomination of the United States which has 11,500 churches throughout the US - in 1991, their first year of what they called "the decade of harvest," they got 294,000 decisions for Christ. They found that only 14,000 remained in fellowship. That is, they couldn't account for 279,000 of their decisions for Jesus. And this is normal modern evangelical statistics when it comes to crusades and local churches.

Many converts don't fall away. They get followed up and squeezed into a local church where they're surrounded by a good social life, and they stay within the church given assurance they're saved when there is no grounds for their salvation, because they do not have the things that accompany salvation.

Now this has happened, this great tragedy has happened, simply because we haven't followed the Biblical example and preach law to the proud and grace to the humble. Always, when you see Jesus approach a proud arrogant self-righteous person with the gospel, He gave law before grace. Always. With the law He broke the hard heart, with the gospel He healed the broken heart.

Why did He do that? Because He always did those things that were pleasing in the Father's sight. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

We see this so often in Scripture, where Jesus resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. The rich young ruler, the arrogant self-righteous lawyer that stood up and tempted Jesus. Both times, Jesus gave the Law. He gave the Ten Commandments. When ones came with humility with a knowledge of sin by the Law, that is Godly Jews, he gave grace.

Paul says in Romans 7:7, "I had not known sin but by the Law." Charles Finney said, "Evermore the Law must prepare the way for the gospel." Now Finney had an 80% retention rate. He said, "Evermore the Law must prepare the way for the gospel. To overlook this in instructing souls is almost certain to result in false hope, the introduction of a false standard of Christian experience, and to fill the church with false converts." And then he said, "Time will make this plain."

John Wesley said of those who failed to use God's Law in evangelism, "All this proceeds from the deepest ignorance of the nature of the properties and of the use of the Law, and proves that those who act thus either know not Christ, or are the strangers to living faith, or at least they're but babes in Christ, and as such unskilled in the Word of righteousness."

Martin Luther, in his commentary on Galatians, which is the book which speaks of freedom from God's law, spoke of a sect that rose up in his day with a Satanic doctrine. Listen to what that doctrine was. He said, "Satan, the god of all dissention, stirs up daily new sects. And last of all, which I should never have foreseen or once suspected, he has raised up a sect such as teach that the Ten Commandments ought to be taken out of the church, and that men should not be terrified by the Law, but gently exhorted by preaching the grace of Christ."

He said that's a sect, a new sect that's risen up, a satanic subtlety and one I thought would never ever come. He was aghast at the thought that men would not use the Law but instead they would gently exhort one to come to Christ, preaching grace alone, which is the perfect summation of the methods of modern evangelism.

Charles Spurgeon said, "They will never accept grace until they tremble before a just and holy Law." George Whitfield said, "That is the reason we have so many mushroom converts." That is, ones that spring up overnight

and disappear because their stony ground is not plowed up. They've not got the conviction of the Law. They are "stony ground hearers" or "false conversions."

Now with those thoughts, by way of reduction, let's look at Romans 7:4. "Wherefore my brethren you are become dead to the Law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

In the book *Hell's Best Kept Secret*, we give an illustration of a speedster who drove through a town at a dangerous speed of 120 mph. He was drunk, there was no law against speeding, so the town council gathered and passed a law stating that 60 mph was the maximum speed, and any transgressors would be fined \$100 for every mph over the speed limit. The speedster comes back. He's apprehended by the law. He stands in front of the judge, who was his own father, the town's only judge. He was proclaimed guilty. He had no money, no words of defense, he couldn't raise the money for the \$6000 fine, so he was thrust into prison. As he waited in prison, his father arrived, opened the door and told his son that he had sold all his goods to raise the \$6000, he paid the fine himself, and that he was free to go.

Now, after such a display of love, such sacrifice on behalf of the father, what would the son's attitude be to the law? Well, firstly, the law has been satisfied. As soon as the fine was paid, he was free to go. He could smile at the law. The judge could say, "you're free." The law had no demand on him whatsoever because of the sacrifice and payment of the father. The law was satisfied.

And what's his reaction to the father? What is his attitude? Well, he's filled with gratitude at such sacrifice and a brokenness that his father would do such a thing for him despite his transgression. And now he lives in honor of the father. He wants to live for the father's will.

Listen to the attitude of a believer to the Law. Romans 7:4 again, "Wherefore my brethren you also are become dead to the Law by the body of Christ." There was the father's sacrifice. That's what appeased God's Law. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law being made a curse for us." "You are become dead to the Law by the body of Christ." The Law has no demand upon the believer. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." "That you should be married to another, even Him who is raised from the dead, that you should bring forth fruit unto God."

So the true believer brings forth the fruit of a new lifestyle, a lifestyle that is pleasing in the sight of Almighty God. If we are rooted and grounded in Christ, it should be evident. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in Me and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit." Colossians 1, speaking of the gospel, says "the gospel brings forth fruit in the believer."

Okay, what does the Bible mean when it speaks of fruit? Specifically? Well, #1, the fruit of repentance (Matthew 3:8). Zacchaeus had "more than tears." He said, "Behold, Lord, if I've wronged anyone I'll pay him back fourfold. I'll give half my goods to the poor." He knew God's Law. He was a Godly Jew. That's what brought him to Christ. It was the schoolmaster to bring him to Christ as a Godly Jew, knowing God's Law. Or should I say, "a Jew that was humbled by the Law." He said, "Behold, Lord, if I've wronged anyone I'll pay back fourfold," which is what the Law demanded.

I remember reading some years ago about a store that said in a newspaper they found a brown paper bag outside their door on a Monday morning. They opened it up and there was a pair of pants and a note that said, "I stole these from you on Friday, became a Christian on Sunday. Here's the pants Monday. I'm sorry." That's fruit of repentance.

Secondly, the fruit of good works. John Wesley said, it was Colossians 1:10, John Wesley said, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can."

Now if anyone was zealous for evangelism, it was John Wesley. He had a zeal that turned the United Kingdom upside down. But he said, "Do all the good you can" because he saw in Scripture that good works are a legitimate tool in evangelism.

Now the modern church, because of what's happened to some fiery Christian organizations over the years that have got into social work, they've noticed they've become lopsided, and they've steered away from good works. And yet the Bible says in the book of Titus, "Let those who of you who have believed in God be careful to maintain good works." Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

When I was first a Christian, I was... I could be considered by the world as a fanatic. I mean, really fanatical. I haven't changed at all. And I used to make leather jackets and suede coats to order for people for years. I made about 1500 over a ten-year period, and I followed in my father's footsteps. You know who the first one was to make a leather jacket? Genesis tells us. God made... clothed Adam and Eve in the skins of animals. Not caveman stuff. Fully lined, with covered buttons. I mean class. When God does something, He does it properly.

And I actually had this in a brochure that I had, and it just said that. "God was first to kill an animal and clothe man in the skins of animals." And I said I was following in my Father's footsteps, and led through the covering that God offers through Christ.

But on the window of my store, I had about a 10 foot by 8 foot window to let in the natural light. I had a Hare Krishna guy got soundly saved. The thing that brought him to Christ, I said "Was it the preaching, what was it?" And he says, "It was the handshake." Feel a Christian shook his hand, he just felt a genuineness, and gave some consideration to the claims of the Gospel, gave his life to Christ, and within half an hour he's eating a T-bone steak. I mean, really set free.

And he said... I said, "Ron, what do you do for a living, what did you do?" He said, "I'm a sign writer." I said, "Really?" And I got him to, on a 10 foot by 8 foot piece of board, to sign write John 3:1-16. And I put it on my window. Incredible amount of work for the poor guy. And he said night after night he was doing this sign. And one night he was very discouraged because it was kind of half an hour per letter to get it right. And he stood back, he felt quite discouraged, he stood back and he read the words, "No man can do these signs that you do unless God is with him," and he was greatly encouraged by the Lord.

Anyway, I put this sign up in the window, and I had on the door, "Behold I stand at the door and knock," a lot of Scriptures. And I shared the entrance with a barber. And this barber called me to him one day, and he says, "Ray, I've got to tell you something." He said, "Guys come into my store, they sit down in the seat, and they turn back here, and they just say with utter disgust and contempt, 'What a fanatic next door.' And they just couldn't say anything more, and nausea consumed them."

But he said, "A number of months ago when you put out a book called *My Friends Are Dying* and got into drug prevention work, the same guys would come into the store, sit down for a haircut, and say 'Doing a good job, that young man next door.'"

And all that was happening was the fruit of 1 Peter 2:15. Listen to it. "For so is the will of God that by your well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." "For so is the will of God that by your well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." If you're a Christian who is rich in good works, people will say, "I don't believe what he believes, but boy I can see that he's genuine." You'll put them to silence, you'll stop their mouth by your good works.

And I saw this a number of years ago. So as an assistant pastor of a local assembly, I said, "Let's get into good works." So I went to a place that sold vegetables, I said "Look, I want to give away 100 bags of vegetables around our local church." I said, "Can you supply us?" They said, "Yeah. If you let us put our name on the bag, we'll give you a good deal. In fact, we'll give you double." So what they did, is they gave us a bag about three feet high packed full of carrots, cabbages, all sorts, corn, all sorts of vegetables, and they put their name on it.

And then we got on a truck, we put a letter on each bag that said something like, "Dear friend." It didn't say, "Greetings in the wonderful name of Jesus," there was nothing Christian on it at all. "Dear friend or neighbor, we're concerned about you, we care about you, we're a local church in your area. If we can help mow your lawn, trim your hedge, if there's anything we can do to help you, please call on us. We're here for your benefit. Yours, sincerely," and just signed it. Put that at the top of the bags, then put them at the gates of 100 homes. Now I said

to the guys putting them there, “Don’t knock on the door, don’t get into a conversation, don’t let anyone think you’re trying to get a foot in their door.”

The reaction was incredible. We had people stop us on the street and burst into tears. One woman burst into tears of gratitude. Another woman said, “I have been in this area 60 years, and this is the first time the local church has done anything for me.” Another one said, “I’m an atheist, but I just want to wish you all the best in the community.”

Another guy, his girlfriend made a commitment to the Lord, and told him. He put his fist into the wall with anger because he was a professing atheist and he saw an evident token of the love of God in those vegetables, and he could not handle it. He just went “umph” like that. I mean, it was just such a powerful thing. One woman, as I said, she said, “I couldn’t believe these vegetables were mine.” Two bucks, is what that bag of vegetables cost. Two dollars. “For so is the will of God that by your good works you put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” The fruit of good works.

Number three, the fruit of thanksgiving (Hebrews 13:15). I mean, if you’re soundly saved, there should be a cry within your heart, “thanks be to God for the unspeakable gift.” If there isn’t the fruit of thanksgiving, if there isn’t a gratitude burning in your soul, you may not be saved.

Number four, the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). It should be evident in, “love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.”

Number five, the fruit of righteousness (Philippians 1:11). There should be the fruit of that which is right, the fruit of righteousness in your lifestyle. Remember Matthew 3:10 says, “every tree that brings not forth good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire.” Therefore as Christians, in our evangelistic endeavors, we should do everything we can not just to get decisions, not just to get church members, youth group members, but to produce fruit-bearing commitments to Christ, because “every tree that brings not forth good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire.”

So what we’re going to do is look at Matthew 4:3 to get an insight into what hinders and what produces genuine fruit. Mark 4, should I say, Mark 4:3.

Now when the Bible says, “behold,” what it’s doing is blowing a little trumpet and saying, “this is important.” When Jesus said words like, “harken,” it was a little trumpet. In verse 3 of Mark 4, Jesus uses both words. This is a double trumpet, so this is incredibly important.

He said, “Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it wither away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and it did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty fold, and some sixty, and some a hundred. And he said to them, He that has ears to hear, let him hear.”

“And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom: but unto them that are outside, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”

“And he said to them, don’t you know this parable? How then will you know all parables? The sower is the sower of the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan comes immediately, and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they in like manner which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they are offended. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this age, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and some bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some a hundredfold.”

Verse 13, I think is one of the key verses in the entire Bible. Jesus said to them, "Don't you know this parable? How then will you know all parables?" In other words, the parable of the sower is the key to unlock the mystery of all the other parables. When you and I get a grip on the understanding that the parable of the sower is about true and false conversion, stony ground hearer, thorny ground hearer, good soil hearer, two false, one genuine, then we begin to understand the other parables, that there are true and false conversions. The good fish, and the bad fish, the true and the false. The foolish virgins, the false, the wise virgins, the true. The man who built his house on rock, the genuine convert. The man who built his house on sand, the false convert.

See I used to think the foolish man who built his house on sand was the unbeliever. No, you read what Jesus said. He said, "he that hears my sayings and *does not obey them* is like a foolish man who built his house on sand." The ungodly don't hear the saying of Jesus. Most of them know "judge not lest you be judged," and the golden rule, "do to others as you'd have them do to you." And both, they're twisted, they don't understand them.

No, the church is filled with people who *hear* the sayings of Jesus and don't obey them. They don't evangelize, even though Jesus said, "you are my witnesses," "let your light shine before men," "go unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." They don't. They are like the man who built his house on sand.

Now using the harmony of the gospel, and the parable of the sower is also Luke 13, sorry, Luke 8 and Matthew 13, using the harmony of the gospel we're going to look at the six characteristics of a false convert, the stony ground hearer.

Firstly, with a false convert, according to Mark 4:5, there are immediate results. They don't weigh the issues. The gospel they hear is not a gospel that's preceded by the Law. They're not made to tremble before the throne of a holy God. They're told they need to get assurance they're going to Heaven. They think they're already going to Heaven. Most people think that. Why? They go about to establish their own righteousness, being ignorant of the righteousness which is of God.

62% of Americans believe in a literal Hell, but they don't believe they're going there. They think they're too good. Now that's human nature. "Every man will proclaim his own goodness." "There is a way that seems right to man, but the end thereof is the way of death." The modern gospel says, "You need to have assurance that you're going to Heaven. You shouldn't go to Hell. You need to come and give your life to Christ. You must have faith in Jesus," and they preach Christ crucified.

So the sinner thinks he deserves Heaven anyway, comes and gives his heart to Jesus, and gets assurance he's going to Heaven. He's got no understanding of sin because Paul said, "I had not known sin but by the Law." 1 John 3:4 says, "sin is transgression of the Law." He's given assurance that he's saved, he's followed up, he's set in a church, he finds new friends, a new lifestyle, gets ahold of his alcohol problem, deals with it, and things go sweet.

And there's still no repentance, and when there's no understanding of sin, there is no Godly sorrow, which works repentance. And Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will perish." And the church is filled with people who have assurance of salvation when it's not Holy Ghost assurance. These ones don't weigh the issues. It's easy to get a decision from them because the bait of eternal life is hung in front of them.

Secondly, there is a lack of moisture (Luke 8:6). There is no thirst for God, for the living God.

Thirdly, there's no root in themselves (Matthew 13:6). There is no depth of Godly character.

Number four, they receive the Word with gladness. Again, there's no Godly sorrow because the Law hasn't been brought to them that they might see themselves in truth. God's Law is like a mirror. When there's no mirror, you can go around the whole day, if someone doesn't tell you, and have a dirty face. You've got no idea.

Each day, every one of us looks in the mirror to see the state. You get up in the morning, look in the mirror to see what damage has been done during the night. I mean, there's no greater evidence that we're in a fallen creation as looking in the mirror first thing in the morning. I mean, we rest ourselves after a hard day. So in the morning, you should be rested. No, the eyes are puffy, you say, "Ugh... oh..."

They don't look into the perfect Law of liberty and see themselves in truth. God's Law is like a mirror. Therefore, they don't go to the water of the blood of Christ to wash, because they don't see themselves as in desperate need of God's forgiveness. Paul said, "by the commandment, sin became exceedingly sinful." (Romans 7:13). So they receive the Word with gladness (Mark 4:16).

Number five, they receive the Word with joy. Their laughter isn't turned to mourning, and their joy isn't turned to heaviness (Matthew 13:20).

And Number six, for a while they do believe. (Luke 8:13). There is a genuine false conversion experience. For a while they do believe.

Now let's look on the overhead projector at this picture which is a picture of two plants. The plant, or plant, on the left is strong and healthy looking. The plant on the right is kind of small. And if you had to make room in your garden because you lack room, most of us would probably make the judgment, "Well the little fellow has to go because the big plant's doing well."

But then let's look at picture number two. We see the sun has come out and it's causing our big, strong, healthy plant to wither and yet the little plant seems to be "doing quite well, thanks." And let's look at picture number three, what we couldn't see, and we see the reason the big plant was withering and the little plant was prospering, because under the soil beneath the big plant was bedrock. The soil could not find... the root could not find depth of root because there was a lack of soil, it was rock. The little plant was small because beneath the soil it was sending its roots in deep searching for moisture.

Now can you see that is was the sunlight that revealed what you and I couldn't see, the soil condition of the plants? Can you see that? It was the sunlight that was instrumental in revealing what you and I couldn't see, the soil condition of the root system of the plants.

Now in the spiritual, the plant is the regenerate life of the professing believer. The soil is his heart condition. In the spiritual, the sunlight is tribulation, temptation, and persecution. Matthew 13:21, tribulation. Luke 8:13, temptation, and persecution, Mark 4:17. Just as in the natural, it was the sunlight that revealed the plants' soil condition, what was going on where we can't see, in the spiritual the thing that reveals what you and I can't see in the life of the professing believer, is tribulation, temptation, and persecution.

Now, if you are seeking to have a house plant prosper and grow, the worst thing you can do is hide it from the sunlight. Okay, you've spent 15 dollars on a really nice house plant, you say "boy this cost me a bit of money. I'm going to look after this. It goes straight into the cupboard." Nice, warm, dark cupboard. No, that's the worst thing you can do. You don't want to shelter a plant from the sunlight. If it's in good soil, if it's got plenty of room, and it's got access to moisture, you know the sunlight is going to prosper it. It is not going to kill it.

Now in the same way, the worst thing that you and I can do with a new believer is shelter him from the sunlight of tribulation, temptation, and persecution. That is the worst thing you can do. When we say, "Well, so-and-so has just given his heart to Jesus in prison, he comes out on Tuesday, let's be there to pick him up, to keep him from temptation, to keep him away from his old friends. And when he has trials, let's make sure we look after him." No, that's the worst thing you can do. If he's genuine, he is going to grow, if he's false he's going to wither and die.

A number of years ago when Russia was in persecution against Christians, I heard there was a prayer meeting among a number of professing Christians. And suddenly, the doors burst open, there were two fully armed Russian guards, and they said in Russian, "Get out of this place if you're not willing to die for your faith." And half of the professing Christians just got up and left. They just ran. And then when the doors closed, the guards put down their guns, took off their hats, sat down and said, "Praise the Lord, we're just sorting out the sheep from the goats before we'd risk fellowship."

Now God doesn't normally use the Russian guard method. He uses open up the ground and swallow them up method. You see, if there was severe persecution that came to the church, what it would do is that it would rid the church of murmurers and complainers. But more, those that cause division, and those that (?????) the Spirit. But more, and I think more importantly, if severe persecution came to the church, it would show the stony ground hearer the error of his ways.

Can you imagine the tragedy of leading someone to Christ, so you think. You don't give him Law before grace. You don't give him the knowledge of sin. You don't show him that he's violated the Law of a holy God, that he has sinned, and sin is transgression of the Law. You just say, "Hey, you've got a God-shaped vacuum in your life. Jesus can give you real peace and love and fulfillment, you just give your heart to Him, and He'll help you with your problems, He'll be with you in trials, and you'll have assurance of Heaven." And you lead him in a sincere prayer.

But there's something lacking in this "believer." He's got no zeal for the lost. He's a stranger to holiness. He's got no hunger for the Word. He's got no depth of prayer life. So you see it as your job, because you led him to Christ, to get him into fellowship. To make sure he's reading his Bible, to pray with him, etc. That, you see, is your job. You follow him up.

And you actually prop him up right until Judgment Day, when the sunlight of the eye of an omniscient God proves him to be the hypocrite that he is. Whose fault was it, if you propped him up until Judgment Day? Wouldn't it be better to let him fall? To not shield him from the sunlight, but let him come under the sunlight and reveal his soil condition. If he's genuine, he's going to grow, if he's false, he's going to wither and die.

For years I put my energies into professing Christians, people who'd given their heart to Jesus. Those who proved to be stony ground hearers, I'd say, "Are you reading the Word" and they'd say, "I haven't really got time. I've got TV Guide, and I've got all these other things I have to do." "So are you going to be at church," "Man, I've got a golf tournament Sunday, I can't be here. I've got swimming next Sunday." Man, no, nowadays, I just leave them. If they don't listen after the first and second admonition, I just say, "Okay, leave it," and then put my energies into the unsaved.

The Bible says, "Desire the sincere milk of the Word, if you've tasted that the Lord is gracious." A healthy lamb will have a healthy appetite. You don't have to force-feed a healthy lamb. Someone who's soundly saved will desire the sincere milk of the Word. They'll discipline themselves. The first thing I knew I had to do when I became a Christian was get myself a Bible and read it and see what God wanted me to do.

And I loved the brethren. And I knew that I'd passed from death to life because I loved the brethren. When I saw in Scripture, "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some," I thought, "okay, I go to church." Surfing can take a second seat.

If a new convert even *looks* back, Jesus says he's not fit for the Kingdom. Luke 9:62, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back is fit for the kingdom." That word "fit" in the Greek is "eusetto." It means "ready for use."

You see, if you take good seed, quality seed, and cast it on stony ground, is it going to bring forth fruit? Umm umm. It can't. Now if you know what you're doing as a farmer, or if you've got substance between your ears, you'll say, "Hey, I've got to turn the soil, cast out the stones, and then when I toss some good seed in good soil it'll bring forth good fruit." Simple farming.

God says the soil of the heart of man is like stone. It says in Ezekiel 8, "I'll take your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." You can take the pure gospel seed and cast it on the unregenerate heart and it will not bring forth fruit. It can't. What we must do is turn the soil of man's heart using the spade of God's Law. Expose the stones of sin that are removed by way of repentance. Then he can receive the grafted Word, which is able to save his soul.

You see, many great evangelists, men and whom I greatly admire and respect, don't really get alarmed about an 80% fall-away rate among their converts.

But I don't think the parable of the sower is given as a consolation to disappointing evangelical results. There are keys given to us to give us understanding. And if you study the good soil hearer, you'll see that he hears and understands, and that he brings forth fruit because he receives the seed into his good and honest heart. So he has a good and honest heart, he has understanding.

Oh, so that's what's going on. Out in secular society there are those who have good and honest hearts and understanding, and they are the ones that will receive the gospel seed. That is not Biblical. Romans 3 says, "there is none that understand." How many understand? None. It says "there is none good, not one," the heart of man is "desperately wicked, deceitful above all things."

So the virtues of understanding and goodness must have come from without the heart, not from within, because it is not in the heart of man to have understanding and goodness. What is it that produces understanding? It's the schoolmaster. The Law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. That's the function of a schoolmaster, to bring knowledge. "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." God said, "My people are destroyed through lack of knowledge of my Law." (Hosea 4:6)

What the Law does, is it brings the light of understanding. The Commandment is a lamp, the Law is light. And when a man comes under the sound of God's Law, he sees that he's sinned against God, that God requires truth in the inward parts and considers lust to be the same as adultery, hatred to be the same as murder, that if you just take one thing that belongs to somebody else, irrespective of its value, you're a thief, and you'll not inherit God's Kingdom. If you tell one fib or white lie you're bearing false witness, and all liars will have their part in the Lake of Fire. Transgressors of God's Law, workers of iniquity.

Jesus said, "Many on that day will say 'Lord, Lord.'" He'll say, "Depart from me you worker of lawlessness, I never knew you." When he understands he's sinned against God, when the soil of his heart has been turned by the Law, the stones of sin exposed, he then removes the stones of sin through repentance, and is able to receive the seed that can save his soul, which is the good soil hearer.

So the essence of what I'm saying is that God has placed within the hands of the church weapons that are not carnal, but mighty through God of the pulling down of strongholds and under God with the help of the Holy Spirit, you and I can determine the soil the seed is going to fall upon, by using God's Law as a spade to turn the soil of an unregenerate heart.

Remember what George Whitfield said. "That is the reason we have so many mushroom converts." Because their stony ground is now plowed up. They have not got a conviction of the Law, they are stony ground hearers.

A friend of mine, he once came to me, he said, "Ray, there's something wrong with my Christian life." He says, "I'm kind of lacking in the zeal you guys have got." And I say, "Hey, Richard, have you got love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance?" He said, "Well, no, I haven't got eight of those fruits." There's only one that he had. And I said, "Well, Richard, by your own confession, I don't see any grounds for you to call yourself a Christian."

Now he did actually have another fruit of the Spirit at that particular time. He exercised the fruit of self-control, because afterwards he said he wanted to re-arrange my face. But he didn't. He went home, he examined himself to see if he was in the faith, concluded he wasn't, repented before Almighty God, and within three months he was such a fruit-bearer our church put him in charge of our coffee bar outreach ministry.

That's why the Bible says examine yourself and see if you're in the faith. Colossians 4:5 says, "Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time." Now I used to think "them that are without, that's the ungodly. That's the secular society." No, a stony ground hearer, a false convert can be within your church, within your youth group, and without the body of Christ.

The Bible says, "Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time." If anyone will steal your time, it's a false convert. He wants counsel, he wants counsel, he wants counsel. He's always coming because he's got problems, problems, problems. I've spent many hours counseling people who didn't need counseled, they needed repentance.

Remember the big plant? What does it need? "Fertilizer! Needs more fertilizer. Put fertilizer up to the top of the plant. That'll help it." Umm umm. You can have a false convert and say "we're going to follow him up. We're going to follow him and follow him. We need more follow-up." No, that's not the problem. He doesn't need fertilizer. The problem is the soil, his heart condition. He needs repentance.

Follow-up is not Biblical. It's not. You check it out. You won't find follow-up in Scripture. You can find feeding, nurturing, discipling, but you'll not find following new converts. David Wilkerson, when he heard the *Hell's Best Kept Secret* teaching, the first thing he said to me when he called me from his car phone when he heard the tape in his car, he says, "I thought I was the only one who didn't believe in follow-up." It's not Biblical.

Follow-up is merely a sad testimony of the confidence modern evangelism has both in its message and in the keeping power of God. If He is the author of their faith, He'll also be the finisher. "God is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him. He is able to keep them from falling and present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." If God has saved them, God will keep them. The Ethiopian eunuch was left without follow-up. Why?

Because if he's genuine, he's going to last, if he's false, he'll wither and die. And the stony ground hearer doesn't need follow-up. By follow-up, I don't mean just looking after someone in the area of making sure they go to Bible. I mean it's when you have the job of following someone who gave their heart to Jesus in a crusade or at church. You go around to their place next week, and knock on the door, and say, "Excuse me, you should really get into fellowship now. Could you open your door? I can see you hiding under your bed."

I mean, it's the most disheartening job in the world following up modern decisions for Jesus. They're always out when you call them on the phone. They don't need fertilizer, they need good soil.

A number of years ago, I had a pastor, a senior pastor, I was on staff at a large church, who was the most Godly shepherd you could imagine. Real Godly man. Now I want to tell you about... how much he weighed and how big he was for a reason. He was about 5'11", maybe 6 feet, his name was Peter Morrow, lovely man of God.

But he didn't weigh too much. I think he weighed about maybe 120 lbs. He used to joke about his lack of weight. He could eat and eat and eat and not put on weight. He must have a glorified body or something. But imagine, he only had one stripe on his pajamas. He had to run around in the shower... he had to run around in the shower to get wet.

A number of years ago, there was a knock on the door of his home. It was 3:00 AM. Early hours of the morning. His son went to the door. He says, "Yeah?" And this guy says, "I want some counsel from your father." Now this teenage boy knew the heart of his father, he knew he was a shepherd and he wouldn't mind rising at 3:00 AM to give counsel to someone, one of his sheep. So he said to the guy, "Just go into the living room and wait for him."

He woke his father up, the father got up, walked to the living room, and as he did so, from behind the door came down a 14 inch machete blade across his face. Sliced his fingers, cut his throat. His sons came running into the living room because they heard him screaming, faced with the blood of their father all around the walls. It was such a horrific thing.

They grabbed the guy thought had murdered their father, and they just about killed him. He was screaming, "I can't breathe," and they said, "Die, die then." He got arrested. The father actually lived. Just had literally hundreds of blood transfusions. He lived.

But the next day, another pastor called me. He said, "Did you hear about last night?" I said, "Yeah. I can't believe that." I said, "That's heavy." He says, "Well, you won't believe this." He said, "The guy that did it was in my church. He's one of my flock." I say, "You're kidding." He says, "Man it's heavy," he said, "that another Christian could do that."

I said, "Hang on a minute." I said, "If someone tries to decapitate the pastor, you could probably conclude that he lacks in the area of love, goodness, gentleness..."

I mean, we've got to start taking Scripture seriously. I do not welcome people into the faith until I see fruit. It doesn't matter too much nowadays, in one sense, but wait till severe persecution comes. Wait till people have machetes, that Christians are actually preaching the whole counsel of God, and we're hated for His name's sake. They're suffering persecution because they're living Godly in Christ Jesus.

You see, the Bible speaks of false brethren twice in Scripture. It speaks of false apostles, false prophets, false teachers, and false conversions. And hardly ever do we hear teaching on them.

I wished a number of years ago I had a video camera when this incident took place. I was going to cross the street, and suddenly I heard “bzzt bzzt,” and I looked down the road. There was this car in the middle of the road and it sounded like there was no muffler on the thing, and the guy was driving like an idiot. So I jumped back off the road onto the sidewalk. I thought I might get run down.

The car went past me, and suddenly the guy saw who it was. He recognized me. The guy who was driving the car was the classic stony ground hearer, a false convert. I'd heard that this guy had already threatened pastors in another assembly, so I had marked him. He saw me, slammed on the anchors of his car, backed up, jumped out, and says, “Hi, Ray.”

Now I wish you could have seen him. He had three Jesus stickers on the front windshield of his car. He had a big cross around his neck hanging in the forest of a hairy chest, shirt undone to his navel, and he was full of Christian clichés, and he wanted to see me for counsel. I was busy that year.

You see, a false convert wants your time. He is a tool of the devil to wear out the saints. Remember, Satan wants to wear down the saints? They are hearers of the Word, and not doers. And what they do is because they lack inwardly depth of root, they have branches and leaves.

Now I believe in Jesus stickers. If someone wants to wear a cross, that's fine. T-shirts are great. But you will find that false converts, because they lack depth of root, depth within their heart, within the soil of the heart, they have lots of branches and leaves to impress you. I mean, they'll have a big Bible.

So you don't feel intimidated, let me tell you what version this is so there's no confusion. This is a “New Pharisee's Bible,” authorized King James version. Widest Sepulcher's Publishing. “Each Bible has been carefully soaked in a bath for one month and then dragged behind a car for two weeks for that special, spiritual look.”

A false convert will lack fruit, but he'll have plenty of branches and leaves to impress those that are around them. Listen to Matthew 7:15-20. “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they're ravening wolves. You'll know them by their fruit. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.”

Listen to this. “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit.” In other words, if someone's genuine, they're genuine, if they're false, they're false. “Nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you shall know them.”

Why should we know each other by our fruit? Well listen to Acts 20:29-30. “For this I know,” says Paul, “that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among your own selves, men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them.”

From your own selves, men will rise up. And you look at all of the cults and sects, and false prophets. It comes from within the body. Not people who have known the Lord, have known the way of righteousness, and gone bad, but people who have had a false conversion and then failed to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance.

Wolves pick off weak sheep. That's what they do. And if I was a pastor and had my own assembly, I'm an itinerant pastor of Hosanna Chapel, I travel most weekends. But if I had my own church, I would watch those who make decisions for Jesus. And I'd watch for fruit.

And if any young guys were a little bit too close to the young girls, hold arms around her, etc., I'd just grab him, have a good talk with him. Mark those. Keep an eye on them. As I said, wolves go for the weak sheep. That's the way of a wolf.

As I said, a genuine convert will stand no matter how great the adversity. Proverbs 12:3 says, “The root of the righteous yields fruit.” The stronger the sunlight, the deeper the roots will go.

Jesus sent his lambs among wolves. (Luke 10:3) That is so different from the way we treat our new converts. We try and shield them. No, he sent as lambs among wolves. Why? Because the sunlight of tribulation, temptation, and persecution will expose the false, and cause the genuine to grow.

And it did so with Judas Iscariot. He was exposed. Judas was not a Christian. He was never a Christian. How do I know? Here's a good clue. Jesus said, "One of you is a devil." That's a good clue. I remember hearing Winkie Pratney, a friend of mine, share about when he saw pictures of Leonardo De Vinci's *The Last Supper*, with Jesus and the disciples. And he'd look at the picture and say, "Where's Judas? Come on, where are you?" And he'd look for the guy with the big hook nose, wringing his hands in a corner like this.

But that is totally un-Biblical. Judas would probably be a real smooth-looking guy. He was so trusted, he was the treasurer of the disciples. He looked after them. He cared for the poor. He was concerned for the poor. When some woman did a lavish act of breaking an alabaster box of ointment, expensive ointment, over the head of Jesus, and washing His hair with her feet...

"Washing His hair with her feet..." You didn't even notice. I could have got away with it. It's probably on tape. At least I'm listening. Nobody else is.

When that happens, Judas said, "Why wasn't this sold for such-and-such amount, and the money given to the poor." He cared for the poor. No, the Bible says he looked after the money. He was a thief. But he was trusted by the disciples. When Jesus said, "One of you will betray me," the disciples didn't sit there and say, "Yeah. I know who he's talking about. Old hook-nose over there. I knew it was hook-nose."

No, they didn't say that. They said, "Is it I, Lord? Is it me?" He said, "It is he who puts his hand in the dish." Judas did that. They didn't say, "oh, yes." No. When Judas went out to betray Jesus, Jesus said, "what you do, do quickly." They thought he'd gone to give money to the poor. Judas was such a good guy. He fooled everyone but the Lord.

Turn to Colossians 4, sorry, Colossians 4:7. And let's look at how Paul put his seal of approval on those who professed to be in the grace of God. Colossians 4:7. And watch how Paul puts his seal of approval on certain believers.

"All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts." So Tychicus is a faithful minister and a fellow servant of the Lord.

Verse 9, "With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you." You see, nowadays, it doesn't matter too much who comes into the faith and who we commend and who we don't. But then, it did, when Christians were being thrown to the lions, being killed for their faith.

"They shall make known unto you all things which are done here. Aristarchus my fellow prisoner salutes you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom you received commandments: if he comes to you, receive him;). And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me. Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, salute you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician [who didn't need an introduction], and Demas, greet you."

There was no seal of approval upon Demas. And if you study 2 Timothy 4:10 you'll see, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." And it's as though Paul looked at Demas and thought, "Yeah, I really don't know about you. There's something not quite right. I'm not going to say, 'If Demas comes to you, receive him.'" "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." A false convert. He didn't just look back, he went back. He was not fit for the Kingdom, and the word "fit" is eusetto, which means "ready for use."

So we have, very briefly, looked at the characteristics of a false conversion. And now, very briefly, before we close we will look at the characteristics of a genuine convert.

According to Matthew 13:23, he hears the word and understands it. This is why it's so vital to use God's Law in witnessing and in preaching. Because without the Law, there won't be understanding of the true state before God. There'll be merely horizontal repentance, not a Godly sorrow which works repentance. They won't understand they've sinned against God. They'll think they've sinned against man with their lying and stealing, etc.

But when David sinned with Bathsheba, he said, "I've sinned against You, and You only have I sinned." The prodigal son said, "I've sinned against Heaven." Paul preached "repentance towards God," the offended party. Godly sorrow works repentance. And without the Law you cannot have the understanding necessary to exercise Godly sorrow which works repentance.

If you use God's Law in witnessing, you'll become familiar with sinners saying things like, "I can see what you're saying. I can understand that. I've never heard it put that way before." That is the reaction almost every time I go through the Ten Commandments one by one, and show the reason they need a Savior is to escape the wrath that's to come. God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.

Listen to Matthew 13:15. "For this people's heart has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and listen, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

You see, when there is an understanding of the heart, then comes conversion. Remember the Ethiopian eunuch was asked by Philip the evangelist, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Remember the lawyer that stood up and tempted Jesus and said, "How can I get everlasting life?" Jesus said, "What is your understanding of the Law? What is your reading of it?" Because if there's no understanding of the Law, there can be no salvation, because sin is transgression of the Law.

Paul said, "I had not known sin but by the Law." Charles Finney said, "I remark the Law is the rule and the *only just* rule by which the guilt of sin can be measured." D. L. Moody said, "This then is what God gives us the Law for, to show us ourselves in our true colors."

I have been in evangelistic meetings where the usual psychological manipulations are used, where the preacher will teach on faith or some Biblical incident, and then right in the middle of his preaching he would say, "Just stop. Let's just bow in prayer. There are people here tonight who don't know the Lord. You need to give your life to Jesus."

And he may preach Christ crucified, but I've been in meetings where Christ crucified hasn't even been preached. No preaching of the cross. There's just faith and then "you need to yield your heart to Jesus because you've got a God-shaped vacuum in your heart. Just slip up your hand while every head is bowed and every eye closed. Nobody is watching you." And when their hand is slipped up he says, "I see that hand. God bless you." And then, what he did, he says "I want everyone to stand and I have seen those of you that have raised your hand. I want you to come to the front when the music plays, when the counselors come."

So the counselors come out as a draw card. That's why counselors come out, to make it easier when the music's playing. People get up the front. And as the pastor is up on the platform, I could see the facial expression of those giving their heart to Jesus. There was no Godly sorrow, no contrition. And after the meeting, one of the counselors said, "You should have been out in the back." And they were counseling those that had just made decisions. There wasn't an ounce of Godly sorrow. People would just say, "Hey, Bertha, fancy you being here." "Oh, Fred, what are you doing here?"

And the expression on the faces of those who come to the front was, "How on earth did I get up here? Really? Because I was sitting in my seat, I just went like that, and suddenly I'm up the front," drawn out by psychological manipulation. That man had a 96... 96% fall-away rate in his converts. That was the last when I heard his statistics, and I don't really think the other 4% would have hung in. Or they may have stayed in the Christian social club, I don't know.

The *true* convert says, "Woe is me. I am undone. God be merciful to me, a sinner."