

Goal, Purpose and Evidence of True Salvation

by Bob Utley

True salvation is not just a ticket to heaven, but a transformed life that bears fruit and brings glory to God.

Duration: 30:26

Scripture: Matthew 13:3

Topics: "True Discipleship", "Salvation Evidence"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of true salvation, highlighting the need for genuine discipleship and the evidence of a transformed life. It challenges the notion of a superficial faith and stresses the necessity of bearing fruit and living a life that reflects Christ's likeness. The message calls for a radical commitment to daily sacrificial discipleship and a shift from a self-centered Christianity to a Christ-centered one.

Transcript

I want to tell you a little bit about Nicaragua and Costa Rica. I've been praying for you. I trust you've been praying for me.

I was the keynote speaker along with an evangelist from South Africa at two conferences, one for the National Baptist Conference of Nicaragua and one was supposed to be for the Baptists of Costa Rica, but the last minute it kind of fell apart and we did this conference for a very large charismatic church in San Juan, Costa Rica. Our emphasis was that evangelism is priority and that evangelism is for everyone. And we differentiated between the gift of evangelism and the task of evangelism, that everybody is not gifted, but everybody is called to give an account of the hope that's in them.

And we spoke to people who had not had a real emphasis on the great commission made in their churches, surprisingly so. In South America, they kind of depend on evangelists that come in for a weak crusade to do evangelism and we tried to impress them that that is not the way God wants it done, that God wants every church and every believer involved in the great commission. Now, this seemed to be a brand-new approach they had not heard.

The other brother, Cecil, preached on the priority of the great commission and I preached on the absolute necessity for discipleship. Now, these two must go together for often they have been separated and the great commission is a mandate not to make a decision but to become a disciple. And then for those of us who are already saved to teach them all that he taught us.

And the goal is, and that's the title of my sermon today, I want you to know that God gave me this sermon over a week ago thinking about you. I knew it was a focus on America. I knew I probably should have done something in all the hassle that we'd gone through, but God had other plans.

I trust that the Spirit of God will speak to you today. The title of this message is, The Goal and Purpose and Evidence of a True Salvation. The goal, the purpose, and the evidence of a true salvation because I believe I live among a people of unclean lips.

I live among a people, Isaiah 29, 13, who speak about God and Christ with their mouth but whose heart is far from him and their religion consists of rules they have learned from other men. I live amidst a country and we can sing songs about God, about his divine plan and purpose and yet we can kill hundreds of thousands of our own baby citizens. We live amidst such terrible immorality and yet we have in God, we trust on our coins.

You don't see the disconnect of that? If we were to walk out today to any mall, any restaurant, and ask people, are you a Christian? The vast majority of them would say, yes, I'm a Christian, but I know my Bible well and my Bible screams at me that the facade of American Western Christianity is a facade and that true salvation has observable characteristics and that the goal of salvation is not a ticket to heaven when you die or a fire insurance policy at the end of your life, that salvation is for time as well as eternity. Now, we just baptized some wonderful people today. Did you hear the quote from Romans 6? Have you heard it so often? You didn't get the tremendous theological impact buried with Christ in baptism.

What's the rest? Raised to walk in newness of life. I'm screaming for the newness of life. I'm sick of dead, irritated, arrogant, denominational, cultural Christianity.

Carries a cross around your neck, but not a crucified Savior in your heart, that knows one or two Bible verses, but never has a desire to read the Bible personally, never has a desire to pray for world evangelization, never has a desire to gather with God's people on a regular basis. We live in a church that more than half of our people come once every second Easter, and we don't think there's a problem. Rotten to the core and don't know it.

We'll give \$10 and the offering plate to the Great Commission and send one of our membership as a missionary and never see that God has a plan for you, that you are an integral part of God's plan to reach this community, this state, and this world, that every believer is a called, gifted, full-time minister of Jesus Christ, or the New Testament is a lie. We've had it so easy so long that me being a New Testament preacher sounds radical to the American church. What we want is somebody to pat us on the head, tell us how wonderful we are, and then leave them alone till next week when we gather in a building and think, this is the church.

You are the church, sucker, and everywhere you go, the name of Christ is on your forehead. And if we are Christian chameleons that act and talk a certain way around certain people and totally change colors when we leave this building and go to work or go to school, God wants to throw up. You are the only Jesus some people will ever know.

You are the only Bible some people will ever read. You are the voice and hands and feet of a crucified Savior in the world today. And that's just the introduction.

Would you turn with me to the parable? Only one of three parables repeated in all three Gospels may be the paradigm parable because it is the parable that Jesus himself interprets, the parable that has haunted me for the last two decades of my ministry, a parable that is so poignant and so real and so shocking to Baptist easy-believism and Baptist once-saved-always-saved imbalance. God, have mercy on me if I'm misinterpreting this, but if I'm interpreting this right, I pray I can loose the Holy Spirit of the whole place. Don't you be telling me you enjoyed this.

You're a strange person if you enjoyed this. I want you to enjoy it. Matter of fact, we ought to stop and pray right now.

Can you pray with me? Holy Spirit, speak to me. Can you pray that prayer with me? If you look at Mark and Luke, the parables also repeated there, he'd been going through the cities preaching. Many people had responded to him.

He stopped again as he did in the wonderful Sermon on the Mount somewhere by a body of water. Crowd was so great that Jesus got into a boat. The crowd settled on the seashore and Jesus began to speak to them.

He spoke to them in parables. It is a major New Testament literary genre of parables. These are hypothetical stories that are taken from common everyday life.

It is an attempt to do two things. From those whose hearts are hardened and controlled by the world and the evil one, parables hide the truth of God. To those whose hearts are opened and available, parables illustrate the truths of God.

In this congregation this morning, this message will confuse and illumine. I have no control over that. That is the sovereign God.

But the sovereign God not only calls, but the sovereign God demands a response. Parables are meant to elicit a new way of thinking about something common and elicit an immediate response from the hearers. Usually parables take something so common everybody to themselves says, I've seen that, I know that, I recognize that, and then suddenly somewhere in the story, somewhere something very surprising, very unexpected, very shocking occurs.

It is at the point of the very shocking that the power of the parable comes into being. It is the unusual twist that gives the new thought, gives the mind of God, and that's what we're looking for today. Beginning in verse 2, great multitudes gathered about him so that he got into a boat, sat down, and the whole multitude was standing on the beach, and he spoke many things to them.

This is just one of the parables he told, in parables saying, Behold, the sower went out to sow. Now, this has been called the parable of the soils, the parable of the sower. I want to kind of give you a historical background quickly of what these villages did in Galilee and really all around the ancient Near East.

A village would teal the field together. Now, if it was a Jewish field, they had stone markers in the field of what part of the large field was owned by a person or a family. They got the crops from that point.

And all the people in the village owned different amounts of the field, but they worked together to plow the entire area around the village or beside the village. So they just plowed everything, just row after row clear across all the land that could grow crops. And of course, in that, there were footpaths that went to the

other villages or footpaths that went to water.

They just plowed right over it. There were places where there was good soil, less good soil, deep soil, thin soil. They just plowed over it.

There were places where the weeds had grown up. They just plowed right over it. So to look at this field, it looked ready for seed.

The richness of the dirt would show across this huge field of this village. And then the people would take their robe, turn it into like a basket, put seed in there, and they would walk down the rows, and they would sow indiscriminately. They wouldn't know necessarily where the footpath used to be or the thorns or the shallow soil.

They would throw the seed indiscriminately in this plowed field. Jesus took this opportunity to talk about spiritual things. At first, the disciples did not understand him.

I don't know if you, it's usually in the Gospel of Mark, but I don't know if you realize how much the 12 didn't get it. Over and over, Jesus said, are you of little faith? Do you still not understand? How many times must I tell you? Over and over and over in Mark. They really didn't get it till after the resurrection in the upper room.

That's when they really got it. Until then, they're following and doing what they think Jesus wants, but they really don't get it. And they did not understand this parable.

But when they were alone, Jesus explains this parable. This becomes the paradigm of how to interpret other parables. In this particular parable, there are several different truths.

I'm very nervous of the word allegory because of how it's been abused, but this is certainly a typology where not just the main character, but really everything kind of has a meaning, Jesus said. And he tells the disciples, beginning a little later, that the seed was the word of God. The Gospel message that he brought.

And if you'll notice in your Bible, beginning in verse 14 down through verse 15, he precedes the explanation by a quote from Isaiah 6, 9, and 10 from the Septuagint. Now, this is a famous quote you know. This is a quote that when Isaiah was called and saw the Lord high and lifted up, and Isaiah asked him about how long would I preach and would they listen? And God says, they will not listen.

They will see, but they won't see. They will hear, but they won't hear. Their minds will not get it.

And the prophet cries out, oh, Lord, how long would this last? And God says, until their cities are destroyed and their land is a waste. What he was saying is there's no hope for the people of God without judgment. Isaiah 6, 9 through 13 or so is really an indictment on God's people who will not hear God.

They look like God's people. They take God's people's name. They quote God's people's book, but they don't hear God.

And there's consequences to that. Now, if you would know, in verse 19, it mentions the evil one. Now, the evil one is mentioned in many of these parables.

In the parallel in Mark, he's called Satan. And what he does is take the seed that falls on the beaten paths. They're very hard soil.

The seed cannot germinate because the soil is packed. And Jesus said, when the gospel is given to the world, spread out like seed, some falls on that packed soil, and the evil one comes and snatches it away before it can germinate. Now, this is very parallel to me of 2 Corinthians 4, 4 that calls the evil one, or Satan, the God of this world who has blinded the eyes of the unbelieving that they may not see the glory of God in the face of Christ.

We go out into the world, we pray, we leave tracks, we design visitations, we hold special meetings, and the great mystery is when we present the gospel clearly, we tell people that Jesus loves them, he died for them, that whosoever will can be saved, that they can have eternal life, they can have the free forgiveness of sin, they can have a purpose in life, they can have peace that passes understanding, they can never be afraid again. The mystery is that some people say, no, no thank you, just don't think I need it, maybe later. Now, to me, that's shocking, shocking, because I know the Holy Spirit is convicting the whole world of sin.

That's his task from John chapter 14 and 16. But the evil one came and took this away and suddenly it's all gone. Have you ever thought that those of us in the church of Jesus Christ know more about God and his plans than any Old Testament person? Do you know that you understand God more deeply than Moses? Than David? Than Isaiah? It is only in the New Testament that these things come together.

Hebrews 1 says that the Old Testament only saw in bits and pieces, but now through a son, the whole thing. You know more about the eternal redemptive plan, more about the heart of the Father, more about the purpose of creation than any Old Testament person. And what haunts me is what are we doing with that kind of revelation? What are we doing with that kind of message? What are we doing with that kind of urgency that the world desperately needs? And the trick is, we're sitting on our hands.

The evil one snatches some of the seed and it never germinates. But there are three other kinds of soils. Listen as Jesus explains them.

Now, verse 20 has been a haunting to me. And I mean that literally, completely. I've grown up in a Southern Baptist church all of my life.

My mother encouraged me to go. I was saved there. I was baptized there.

I was called to preach there. I was licensed there. I was ordained there.

Gone to Southern Baptist schools. And I have been told over and over that if you just pray this prayer, if you just receive Christ, then no matter what happens, you go to heaven when you die. The vast majority of you have heard that message all your life.

Now, I want you to look at verse 20. Did Bob write this? Bob did not. This is the words of Jesus.

And the one on whom the seed was sown in the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. Do you hear what that just said? That's not in all the parallels. This is the rocky one.

This is the shallow soil. It germinates, yes. The plant comes out of the seed, yes.

There is greenery. It's described a person as receiving the gospel message with joy. They're happy about the message.

And yet he has no firm roots in himself, but only temporarily. And when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. Now, there's two parallels I want to deal with there because this is shocking to those of us who've always heard, if you only believe, if you only receive, if you only walk down the aisle, if you only sign this track, then you've got a contract with God.

You've got the promises of God. This is all there is. Lie, lie, lie, from hell, a lie.

I want you to look with me at John 8, 31 through 59. John 8, 31 says, and these Jews believed in him. That is the same Greek word as John 3, 16.

These Jews believed in him, John 8, 31. They begin a discussion then, Jesus, with these Jews who believed in him. And as he began to talk, they began to be prideful about their Jewishness, who their mother was, their Old Testament roots to Abraham.

At the end of the chapter, Jesus says to them, Abraham knew my day and rejoiced. They said, are you kidding me? You're not even, I forgot what age, 40, 50 years old. How can you say Abraham saw your day and rejoiced? And Jesus said a word that shocked these Jews.

He said before, Abraham was, I am. Now, folks, I am is the meaning of the covenant name Yahweh. And these Jews were so upset at what Jesus said.

Look at the last verse. They picked up stones to kill Jesus whom verse 31 says they believed in him. This shows the fickleness and temporariness of some belief.

As I was preparing for this message, I was reminded of 1 John 2, 19, 1 John 2, 19, where John says of the church, of the church, of the visible church, they went out from us because they were not of us. And by going out from us, they showed who they were. My first sermon that I preached, I guess, 40 years ago now at First Baptist Church of Bel Air, Texas, my home church, first time I ever got to preach, I surrendered at 12, but didn't really get serious till 21.

First time they let me preach, I can't believe it now, but I preached on Matthew 7, 21 through 23. Do you know that? And that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did not we do many miracles in your name, cast out demons in your name, preach in your name? And Jesus whirls on that group and says, Depart from me, you accursed, for I have never known you. Do you mean it's possible to have a facade of religiosity, even an active ministry, successful ministry, and quote Jesus' name and not belong to him? Have you watched the programs on our airways that claim to be from Christ and all they are is money-making programs for some individual? When you talk more about send me your money and you do a crucified Savior, a plague on your house.

We're surrounded by spirituality that is false and we don't know our Bible well enough to know the difference. This man fell away, received it with joy, temporary belief, and fell away. Look at the next one, 22.

And the one who the seed fell among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word and the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, trope the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And verse 23 is the kicker. I made a statement in this church several weeks ago that I made at the board meeting of International Commission, the group I go with in world evangelism.

This was the quote that they put on a banner in South America at these conferences. Evangelismo, sin, disciplismo. Sorry, my Spanish is abortion.

Do you mean to tell me if we focus on the initial decision and totally ignore the call for a changed life that there is a biblical possibility that nothing happened at the decision? That's what I'm saying to you. That is what I'm saying to you. This is the radical nature of this message.

You must decide if I'm reading too much in this. Now, immediately you'll go to all the passages that say it's free. Romans 3.24, Romans 6.23, Ephesians 2, 8, and 9. I know that.

The Bible presents truth in tension-filled pairs to keep us in the middle. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ plus nothing. Amen? Now, this is what I want to say next.

Salvation costs everything that you are and have from the day that you freely receive it until the day there is no more breath in your body. And what America has missed is the call for daily sacrificial discipleship. No, no, no, we just want to come to church, sit in an air-conditioned building, gripe at what's happening, go home and turn on the TV, and call ourselves Christians.

I hope you know that eternal life has observable characteristics. Now, look at this last verse. The one on whom the seed was sown on the good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and brings forth some a hundred, some 60, and some 30.

Now, there is a parallel in Luke 8.15 that says, they are steadfast or persevere. Now, this is the missing element in Baptist salvation gospel presentation. We offer the free and we totally ignore the ongoing.

We say that salvation is initial repentance in faith, and it certainly is, and it's absolutely free, and it certainly is. But salvation is a contract or a covenant between a sovereign God and a responsible human being, and what starts in repentance in faith must issue in repentance in faith, and what starts as a gospel seed must, must, must, must, must, must turn into gospel fruit. Germination.

Now, here is the hairy one. Germination of the seed is apparently not salvation. Germination of the seed is apparently not salvation because one seed germinated with joy and fell away.

The evidence of a true salvation is not how high you jump, how much you cry. The evidence of a true salvation is Christ's likeness. The goal of Christianity is Christ's likeness.

The goal of salvation is not about you going to heaven with your family. The goal of salvation is that the lost world go into heaven through you and your family. The goal is the children become voluntary servants.

Now, it doesn't matter if you have 100-fold, 60-fold, or 30-fold. How much fruit is not the issue? Fruit is the issue. And you say, Bob, can you define fruit? No, I cannot.

There's no text that defines fruit. Some evangelists say it means winning people to Christ, but that's an overstatement of Scripture. I would say that I think fruit is Christ's likeness.

How that differs from 30, 60, and 100, I just don't know. But the radical message is it's not enough to say yes. You must live yes.

Do you get it? It's not enough to start. You've got to finish. Do you remember the letters to the seven churches? All seven of them say, all seven of them say, which are really Jesus' last words to the church,

to him who overcomes, I will give the crown of life.

Implication? I'm not sure if the text that talks about do not grow weary is talking about salvation or gospel living. I don't know, but it's scary to me that the church today wants to do some religious event, some religious prayer, some religious action, some religious moment. They want a moment in time with Christ, but they don't want a calendar with Christ.

They want an experience. They want to keep going back and saying, I remember when I jumped two feet. Well, what did you do at work last week? If we got your neighbors and family up here, is there enough evidence to convict you of being a believer? Or is the only way we know is where you park your car one hour a week? Is church a building? Is church an hour? It is not.

You are the church and people are watching, and the parable of the soils is a penetrating word to an American, apathetic, indifferent, non-Great Commission. What's in it for me? I'll see you next week. Church!

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