

Too Much Riding on Eternity (Part 1 of 2)

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the narrow gate and the danger of false prophets in the church, highlighting the need for truth and protection from deception.

Duration: 53:35

Scripture: Matthew 7:1-20, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Philipians 1:6, James 2:19, 2 Peter 1:20-21

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "True Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker highlights the importance of ministers of Jesus Christ being willing to confront and address the spiritual condition of individuals in the congregation. He emphasizes that this may not be well-received in American culture, where people are often thin-skinned and sensitive to criticism. However, the speaker argues that such confrontation is an act of love and necessary for the spiritual growth and well-being of believers. The sermon also touches on the misconception that salvation is a mere label or identification as a Christian, emphasizing that true salvation is a supernatural work of God and should result in a transformed life. The speaker concludes by urging the congregation to worship God wholeheartedly and with all their strength.

Transcript

We're privileged again this morning to hear Brother Paul Washer, who was our guest last Sunday. He'll be coming right now. You hear him prayerfully as he brings God's Word to us.

Brother Paul. Well, I have a question for you. Are you exhausted? You ought to be.

You ought to be. We ought to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And we are to worship him as such.

I am sure that many of the music people have gone down from this platform a bit tired. It even says of Jesus that when he ministered, virtue went out from him. It would be a good thing, Church, for you to worship the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

It'd be a very good thing indeed. Let's go to the book of Matthew, chapter seven. Matthew, chapter seven.

Verse 13, it's all stand. Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction.

And there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life. And there are few who find it.

Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then you will know them by their fruits.

Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name cast out demons and in your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.

Let's pray. Father, I come before you in the name of your son. And I pray, Lord, that you would grant us a measure of grace.

Speak forth your word, wisdom, grace to be humble so that you do not have to humble me. Lord, guard my mouth, control every aspect of my being, that I not be an obstacle to the word read. And Lord, do a work among us.

Strengthen the true believer, make known your gospel to the lost and above all things, that your son, as he reigns in glory, might take good pleasure in what is done here today. For his sake and his glory. All riches and honor to him.

Amen. You may be seated. Last week, I spoke on character.

What makes a Christian Christian? The points, the essential characteristics of a true believer that although they might not be perfected in that believer, they will be seen, they will be evident, they will be growing. But there was nothing that I said. Last Sunday, that would be an offense, in a sense, even to a secular man, because even secular men agree that we must have character.

But today there will be a hinge of offense in what I say. Now, I pray to God and the fear of God that it is not with a mean and tight spirit that I say what I'm going to say. But I pray that there is a blade on these words and that that blade will cut into your heart deep and carve out for you the truth, burn away like fire, the dross.

Cause you to see yourself as you should be seen. There is a great problem in having a church like yours. It's pretty.

There are a lot of friendly people here. It's a wonderful place to be, and I am not the prophet nor the son of a prophet. But if this church is like any other church in America today.

There are those who will align themselves with a church such as this that are yet to enter the kingdom of heaven. There are those who can become church members because even the wisest of God's servants cannot discern the hearts of men. There are so many people in America today who believe themselves to be Christian, when in fact they are not.

As a matter of fact, if we were to take seriously what the Bible teaches about genuine conversion, we would have to submit to the point that a great many people in the Southern Baptist Convention are lost. Now, do I say these things to hurt you? No, I say these things. Because of some measure, at least of love that God's put in my heart for you.

And for your children, do you really want to live your life and hang eternity on just a few warm and fuzzy cliches? Or do you want to know the truth? And the only truth that can set men free, that can be a divider, a discernor in your heart so that you might recognize whether or not you've truly been born again or whether or not you're one among a multitude of men and women and children who are deceived. There's too much riding on eternity to be flippant with salvation, and that by and large has been done throughout America. I worked for many years in a country in South America where the great majority, if not almost all, believe themselves saved because they were baptized as infants.

And we as Baptists, we shake our finger at that and we mock how unbiblical that is. And we do not realize that we do the very same thing. We've even made it easier.

Have you repeated this prayer? My dear friend, no one has ever been saved by repeating a prayer and asking Jesus Christ to come into their heart. They are saved by repenting of their sins and believing the gospel. And it is a supernatural work of God that will produce fruit.

Verse 13, enter through the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction. And there are many who enter through it. Now, first, we're speaking about a gate and as Baptist in America, at least the conservative part of Baptists in America seem to have done well in standing for this truth, that there are not many gates.

There are not many doors. We have made it quite clear in our profession here in this country that there is only one door and his name is Jesus Christ. That Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life.

And no man comes to the father except through Christ. Christ is the only prophet. Christ is the only king.

And Christ is the only savior. Apart from him, there is nothing. Now we have done well in saying that, but let's go further for the gate is small.

Something that we say, well, Jesus is the only gate, the only door. But not only is the gate small, the way is narrow that leads to life. And there are few who find it.

There are few who find the gate and there are few who find the way in America today. If I were to look at the evangelical church in America and I were to rewrite this text based on what I see with my own eyes and based upon what I hear preached out of many pulpits, it would be this. The gate is small and the way is broad.

You see, when you teach only half of the truth, you have a heresy much, much more dangerous than an out and out lie. We somehow have come to believe that believing in Jesus is a creedal thing in which you just say, yes, I believe these certain things about him. Therefore, I am born again.

And we do not realize what James says, that even the devils do that. But the fact of the matter is salvation is a supernatural work of God through which as great a power, divine power is revealed in the salvation of a man as in the creation of an entire universe. And that if a man has truly passed through that small door, that Jesus Christ, then he will walk in the narrow way because God who began a good work in him will

finish it.

This was one of the most important teachings, pastoral teaching in ancient times. In the early days of the Baptist faith, even it was a stone, a cornerstone, it was used to determine the validity of one salvation. And also, you need to understand that was also the job of a pastor.

To help people in the congregational setting, but also one on one, determine whether or not it was right with their soul. One of the things that my wife noticed when she first came to this country was this. Americans in this country are so thin skinned, we recognized in Peru that it was part of the task of the minister of Jesus Christ to go to souls in the congregation and actually say, I've been watching the life of your 16 year old son.

Now, I know that three years ago he made the good profession and was baptized and publicly identified himself with Jesus Christ, but I have been watching his life and it does not seem well with him. If you did that in America, you would be saying goodbye to many of your members. And yet, dear Christian, don't you realize that a man who will do that loves you? A man who will do that loves your children.

As I said last week, I have gone this far in the Christian journey only because of the rebukes and the care of godly men and women in my life. You have to determine whether or not in the days to come, do you want this to be just another religious social club or do you truly want this church to be a high point for the gospel of Jesus Christ in this world? Well, if you do, then it comes down, first of all, to understanding theologically, not only the characteristics of the gospel, but the power there of the power of the gospel, that there is a door and his name is Jesus and there is a way and it is according to his word. And if you do not reflect in any degree that you are walking in his way, it is because you have not passed through him as the door.

Now, let me explain to you just how this text has been used in the past in a correct way to pastor the people of God. If someone has truly been converted, then they have passed through the small gate now. But I live among a multitude of people in my country that have supposedly passed through this small gate.

What is it now? Sixty five percent of Americans believe they've had some sort of born again experience. Now we know from the teachings of Jesus that few find. This gate, few find this way, so we understand that many are deceived, so how can I understand whether or not I am deceived? Now, you've heard of the doctrine of the security of the believer, it's not a really good way to put it, but that's a true doctrine.

Anyone who truly believes in Jesus Christ is secure. You are saved by the power of God. You are kept by the power of God.

That is the clear teaching of Scripture. Everyone who truly believes in Jesus is secure. But the question is, how do you know you believe in Jesus? See, that's the difference between the doctrine of security and the doctrine of assurance in America today.

We've combined the two and lost them both. The doctrine of security is the true believer is secure. The doctrine of assurance is how can I have assurance? I'm a true believer when there are so many people around me calling themselves believers and obviously they're not.

Could I just be one among a multitude of people who are deceived? Well, the ancients. They would say this from this text to be a true believer, you must believe upon the Christ. That's the work that you must do.

You must believe in the Son. How do you know, though, after making the good profession of faith? How do you know that you have truly believed in the Son? Is it because some silly evangelist told you to write the date in the back of your Bible? Is it because you repeated a prayer? No, you have assurance and you grow in assurance because you're walking in the narrow way. And if you're not walking in the narrow way, you can have little or no assurance that you've really passed through the narrow gate.

And you say, well, Brother Paul, are you talking about sinless perfection? No, we're speaking about style of life. The true believer by the power of God. We'll walk in the narrow way as a style of life.

When the true believer steps off that narrow way, which can and has happened to all of us to varying degrees at different times in our life, then the discipline of God will come and lovingly, although strongly, bring that child of his back. But if someone can claim to have passed through the small gate and yet they do not walk in the narrow way or they walk in the narrow way for a time and then just bolt like a wild calf, never to return again, it is not that they have lost their salvation. It's that they have never had salvation.

So he says, enter through the narrow gate. Come to me, he says, come to me. There are more people than you would think that are trusting in a movement, trusting in a church, trusting in Jesus plus something.

But no, my dear friend, it is Christ and Christ alone. It is enter through the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction. My dear friend, it is for this reason I am not that worried about your self-esteem.

And I am not that worried about whether or not financially you're making much progress in life or whether or not your checkbook is balanced. I have higher things to think about your destruction. You say, well, there it is.

That's it. You die and you're judged and you're just destroyed, annihilated. So what's the big difference now? As life is eternal, so destruction is eternal.

How then shall I preach like a dying man to dying men, preaching as though I shall never preach again is how I should preach eternity on my eyeballs. How is it with your soul? How is it with the soul of your children? I have a little boy that's three and another one that's nine months. Sometimes I'll come and ask for prayer in my church, asking that God would somehow be gracious to them, even though he owes them nothing, that he would save them as he has saved their father and people will see my brokenness.

And then they'll say, well, how old are they? And I'll tell them and they'll kind of laugh starting a little early. How can you start early when such things are at stake? This, my dear friend, is a soul and it's not to be dealt with. I want to tell you something.

There's everything in place here. The man of God who stood in this pulpit put everything in place for this church to do something grand. And you can get some little boy in here, he'll turn it into nothing but someone counting numbers and promoting themselves to become big and write books.

And if that's what you want to do, that God would send lightning down from heaven and destroy this entire place right now. The thing we're dealing with are people and people are not numbers. They have different colors.

They have different kinds of hair. They have different color eyes. They have different kinds of fears and problems and needs, but they all bleed when they get cut.

You do not turn this into a baptismal machine. This is to be a church where we love people and therefore we tell them the truth in love and humbly because there's an eternal destruction out there and there are many who enter through it. There are many who will be destroyed.

Anyone who takes this truth seriously will go mad apart from also understanding the sovereignty of God for the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life. There is a way, my dear friend. And few find it now going to reveal to you something quite shocking, at least if you understand it, it'll be shocking.

For the most part, this text is taken in a wrong context. People listen to this passage. Few will find it.

And this is what they begin to think. That's right. You know, there's this band of us in America that call ourselves Christians.

And, well, there's not that many of us. And out there is Hollywood in the larger cities and all these things and the secular mindset and everything. And there's this group of us over here, the ones who call themselves Christians.

And we're not very large and we're on the way to heaven. But the rest of the world out there that makes up the majority. Well, well, they're only going to find destruction.

That's not what this text is saying. What the text is saying is this within the context of those who call themselves Christians, few will find it. Within the he's not talking, he's not talking about Hollywood.

He's not talking about those with secular mindsets. He's not talking about those who are atheists. That's a no brainer.

Everyone knows where they're going. He's talking about those who identify themselves with the Church of Jesus Christ. Among those people who call themselves disciples, few will find the way.

You say, well, I'm not sure I agree with your context. Well, it's not my context. It's scriptures context.

And let's take a look at it just for a moment. Look at something here. You go over to verse twenty one.

Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven will enter. Look what he's saying. He's not talking about here's this group of people over here that call Jesus Lord.

And here's this group of atheists over here. No, he's talking about within the context of those people who emphatically declare Jesus Christ to be Lord, that few of them are actually regenerated and converted. That's what he's teaching.

Now, when I stand up here and tell you, that's what he's teaching. I want you to understand that I am following certain principles of Bible hermeneutics. That's the science of how to study the Bible.

And one of those is this. You always do your theology in the context of the church. Now, I'm going to explain what that means.

If I read this passage and I seem to say to myself in my private study, wow, this is in the context of believers, context of those people call themselves believers and say, well, no one else is really preaching that. Well, then a red flag ought to jump up for me. If no one else is saying this, maybe I'm wrong.

But if I go back through a couple of hundred, maybe even thousand years of Christian history and find that down through the ages, this is what men and women of God have preached throughout the ages, then I have some authority. This is not just my private interpretation, but men and women of God down through the ages, this is what they said. It is our contemporary Christianity that has gone awry.

So in the context. Of those of us in America. Who emphatically declare Jesus to be Lord, who do all sorts of things from preaching to casting out demons to performing miracles, few, few.

Are truly regenerated by the spirit of God, have truly experienced conversion now in verse 15, beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Many times prophets are not that nice, but false prophets are always nice. False prophets will never make you angry.

Why? Because the false prophet wants to make a true prophet off of the people of God. You do not need. Oh, yes, dear friend, you need to be encouraged, you need to be edified, you need to be built up in your faith, you need to hear the God and you can do it.

You need to know your love, you need to know so many things, but you also need to know truth that sometimes will cut you to the very core because you're swimming in a fish tank. You're swimming in a culture that has heresy written all over it, that has apostasy written all over it. You live in a culture like that, as Isaiah said, I'm a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips.

Now, if you've been born again, you no longer have unclean lips, but you most certainly still dwell among a people of unclean lips. You need truth. Your children need truth.

One of my prayers had been, oh, God, if I were to pass away, that my two sons would sit under a man bold enough to make them fiercely angry if necessary. Beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. I spend a lot of time, I don't know why, in kind of transitional situations like I am right now.

I've done this before in many churches. They're in between pastors. I always tell them, do not make the foolish mistake that so many churches make of picking a man just because he speaks well.

Too many years have gone in. To bringing this church to a certain place, I want you to know it can all be destroyed in a matter of a few months. Oh, they look so pretty, these false prophets.

Their breath is so sweet, but inwardly they are dead men's bones. They are vipers turned inside out. You want the truth, if not for your own sake, for the sake of your children.

You want the truth. Now, let me say something before we move on to verse 16, something an old preacher told me one time. One of the greatest problems in America today is this.

We put men out to pasture at the very moment when they're finally becoming wise enough to be able to teach somebody something. We are a cult of youth, and that is why we are a very stupid people. Now you understand why I preach in a lot of Baptist churches once.

And old man told me, boy, your best friend is the one who tells you the most truth. Your best friend is the one who tells you the most truth. Now, in the context of verse 15, we understand that Jesus in the immediate context is speaking about false prophets.

But it is also quite clear that this goes beyond just the realm of a false prophet to help men discern those who are truly converted in the body of Christ and those who are not. It is also clear that this is a great litmus test, even for the man standing in this pulpit. Now, what I mean by that, it's this.

I have assurance of salvation. I do, I have assurance of salvation, but I want you to know something. We have become a people who no longer meditate upon the deep things of God.

We have become a people who no longer consider this question. Is it well with my soul? The devil keeps everyone so busy. They do not know themselves, and even the secular philosopher says a man who does not know himself, what a pity, what a pity.

Know thyself. Is it well with me? Someone stands up and says there's sin in the camp. Well, of course there is.

The question is, is that sin in me? We need to be a people who contemplate the condition of our own soul. The way our steps. We need to scrutinize in grace, of course, without condemnation, surely, but nonetheless, we need to think.

Is it well with me? Is it well with my wife? Is it well with my children? So this text will help us do that. Yes, it's about false prophets in its immediate context, but it has a wider context to help us all. So let's take a look.

Verse 16, you will know them by their fruits. Verse 20, you will know them by their fruits. Here we have a section of teaching and it is begun and it is ended.

With a very, very simple statement, you will know them by their fruits, period. Well, you can't judge a book by its cover. Who told you that? From where did that teaching come? That teaching did not come from our Lord.

He said exactly the opposite. Well, judge not, lest ye be judged. And I always say and twist not scripture, lest ye be like Satan, because in the same context of judge not, lest ye be judged.

There is the word judge. I am to judge myself in a sense. And there's another sense in which I am not to judge myself.

There is a sense in which I am to graciously and lovingly and mercifully judge my family and judge you. If I love you and you are to judge me, you are to be concerned for my soul. Has my soul no worth to you? Has your soul have no worth to me? This is a highway we're on, folks.

This is not dress rehearsal. There are no dress rehearsals. It's one time through here and then judgment.

There are some things about which we must be quite serious. He says you will know them by their fruits. I was raised on a farm in Illinois, a small farm.

Doesn't seem to be very, doesn't seem to be a whole lot of complications in this statement. If I have no fruit or my fruit is inconsistent, then I should ponder. Do I know the Lord? Even more, does the Lord know

me? Because you will know them by what they do.

By how they are, by the things that spring forth from their life, you will know them. We judge everything else in this manner. Is it not true? Everything else we do in the world, we judge in this manner.

But somehow we have been deceived by the devil to believe that once we come into the spiritual realm, these common sense things no longer apply and that someone can actually bear the fruit of the devil. And you are not to judge them. We have grown to the point where the point of just being ridiculous.

Well, I know I'm not this way, but you can't tell me. Yes, I most certainly can tell you that you've got problems. And I would hope that you would most certainly tell me because, yes, my dear friend, Jesus said you will know them by their fruits.

And then he says something. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? Now, what is he doing? Well, be a little dramatic here. Let's say when Jesus taught, for the most part, he sat down and he would teach and the Pharisees would be around him and oh, they would be furious.

I mean, they would tear the ground apart. And after the dust settled, Jesus would look at them and say, you want to hear another parable? He knew how to catch men. It was frightening.

You did not want to enter into a debate with this man. And he says something like this. Thorns.

You're not going to find those on fig trees, are you? You could just hear the crowd. Well, of course not, Jesus. I mean, you're a carpenter, but anybody knows that you're not going to find thorns on fig trees.

You're learning, Jesus. Good. Then figs.

You're not going to find them on thorn trees. Well, of course not. Look, Jesus, if anybody comes to you saying they've got figs on a thorny branch, they've got something to sell.

Jesus, they're either lying or they're a lunatic. I mean, it's absolutely absurd. You can't have a fig tree with thorns and you don't have a thorn tree that produces figs.

Jesus, you need to understand these things. Very well, then don't call yourself my disciple unless you bear my fruit. He trapped men.

Let's say I arrived here today and I mean, I get here just barely in time to climb up into the pulpit. I'm even a half an hour late. And and I mean, you know, the elders, everyone else can go, what's your problem? I mean, don't you appreciate the fact you've been allowed to preach here for a few weeks? I mean, this is a great honor.

What? You know, you just show up when you want to. And I said, look, I had a big problem. I was coming here out on this highway here and I just wasn't paying much attention to things.

And I had a flat tire and I took the lug nut off that tire. And it rolled out into the highway and I just wasn't thinking and I just ran out into the highway. I picked up that lug nut.

And when I stood up, I mean, no more than five yards in front of me was a logging truck weighing 30 tons going 120 miles an hour. And it ran me flat over. And that's why I'm late now.

They're going to say that can't be. And I'm going to say, why? And I said, well, it's impossible. Why is it impossible? Well, it's illogical.

Listen, it's impossible to have an encounter with a logging truck going that fast and not be changed. I mean, a person who says something like that is either got to be deceived in a lunatic or they've got to be an out and out liar. But it's impossible to have an encounter with a thing as big as a truck and not be changed.

Then why are you telling me so many people have had an encounter with God and they've never been changed? Has God grown smaller than a logging truck? You see, this salvation thing, let me put it this way. I love you. Let me tell you something.

It's not about you. It wasn't initiated because of you and it will not all end in you. I know I love you, but let me tell you something.

God does not love people more than anything. Loves himself, his own glory. But that's another sermon.

But God's reputation, his glory is riding upon his work in you. Therefore, it will not fail. Have you not read the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you? Because of what? People who declared themselves to be the people of God when they were not.

God, let me just throw out some ecclesiology to you. This is doctrine of the church. You ever heard someone stand up and go? There's just as much sin in the church as there is outside of the church, just as much as divorce, just much pornography and lying and cheating and hatred and everything in the church is out of the church.

That's a lie. Let me tell you something about the Church of Jesus Christ in America. It's absolutely beautiful, absolutely gorgeous, absolutely glorious.

It is humble. It is broken. It is walking with the Lord.

And when it steps off the steps, God disciplines it lovingly and quickly and brings it back. You say, well, that's a contradiction. No, it's not.

You don't understand what the church is. You ever heard someone say, well, we're Christians. We shouldn't hate each other.

If you're hating each other, you're not Christians. A rose by any other name. My dear friend, what you need to understand is God has called forth and elect people from the foundation of the world.

He who began a good work in them will finish it. And that's all there is to it. It's glorious.

And if you're sitting there today and you're saying, well, the reason, you know, like Gandhi said, you know, the reason I don't become a Christian is because of because of the Christians don't make the same mistake. What he's saying is because the devil raised up all these ungodly, carnal people who identify themselves with Jesus Christ, I'm going to go to hell, too. I could parade around here as a horse.

Ed, the talking horse. And I could hurt everybody in this church. Would you think it a remarkable thing if most of you turned out hating horses because of me? I don't like horses.

Why? Well, because Paul Washer said he was a horse and he did all sorts of terrible things to me. We would expect more from your mind, wouldn't we? We would expect you to say it's absolutely ridiculous. He calls himself a horse.

He's no more horse than a man on the moon. He doesn't have the characteristics of a horse. And I'm not going to hold what he's doing against all the horses.

I've met some very fine horses in my day. But when we get to Christianity, we seem to throw any sort of common sense out the door. And Jesus calls us back to reality, and he says, you'll know them by their fruit.

Now, I want to finish with verses 17 and 18, and we'll go on tonight and work on this passage, I want to show you something. People do not recognize that these are probably two of the most important verses in the entire Bible with regard to soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. And this is what it says, so every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

Now look at this verse 18, a good tree can not produce bad fruit, nor a bad tree produce good fruit. Now, this is a problem that we have in our amongst our own people. And it's this again, you teach a half truth.

You're going to get into a lot of danger. Here's the half truth. We're always telling people someone comes and they're obviously not a Christian.

They recognize they're not a Christian. And they tell you, you know, I just want to change my life. I just want to change my life and then I'll come to Jesus.

What do you always tell them? You tell them, look, you can't change your life. You can't fix yourself up and then come to Jesus. You must come to Jesus.

And you tell them, look, in a sense, you're a bad tree and a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. I mean, you can do some things that seem really good, but your entire being, your nature has to be changed by the power of God. You cannot just produce good fruit.

You can't do it. You need Jesus. That's what we tell them, right? A lost man cannot produce good fruit.

Why don't we tell them the other part that a saved man cannot produce bad fruit, can not doesn't say just won't or will not or will try not, but cannot. Now, we have to be very careful here to understand exactly what Christ is saying and not saying he is not saying that the true believer can not sin. As a matter of fact, one of the evidences that you are a true believer is that you recognize the sin in your life and you humble yourself before it, even after you've walked 80 years with the Lord.

But what he is saying is just like this. You go out to again, I'm a farmer. I still live on a farm in the middle of a cornfield in Illinois.

You go out to an apple orchard, you go out to a crop of corn, wherever you go, you look at an apple tree. If it's good at the root, if the trunk is good, if it's a healthy tree, it is going to produce good fruit. Now, if you study around on that thing for a while, sure, you're going to find some bad apples, you're going to find some decay.

But the very nature of that tree can only produce good fruit as a style. When you look at it holistically, you're going to be able to pick out some things that are wrong, but basically healthy tree, healthy root,

healthy fruit, this tree, this healthy apple tree would have to go against its very nature to produce that you're a Christian. According to the many prophecies, especially in the book of Ezekiel, from which we understand the doctrine of regeneration, you have been supernaturally transformed by the power of God.

You have been recreated, that heart of stone, that heart that was hostile against God has been removed and it has been replaced with a heart, with a nature created in the image of God and true righteousness and true holiness. That is why before you were a Christian, you could sin and it didn't make you nauseous. Why your nature was sinful and you produce sin and you love sin.

But when you were converted, when you were regenerated, you were given a new nature. And when in your flesh you go ahead and sin, that new being, that new you is nauseous about it because you are actually living in a sense unnaturally. When we speak about very, very wicked things, if we're being kind and especially if we're in mixed company, we will say that is not natural in the same way it is not natural anymore for you to sin because you have a new nature.

You see, salvation is not just you jumping out of the line, going to hell into the line, going to heaven. It's not just a human decision. Salvation is a supernatural work of God through which you really do become a new creature.

Now, here's the question. Is that a reality for you today? And I don't want to know about three years from now. Is that a reality for you? Whenever the Bible deals with whether or not a person is truly saved, it never asked them to go back to some point in time when they prayed a prayer.

But it says this, examine yourself, test yourself. Today, since your profession of faith in Jesus Christ and your first public profession of faith in Jesus Christ was not when you walk down this aisle, your first public profession of faith in Jesus Christ is when you go through the waters of baptism. If you have gone through the waters of baptism as a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, proclaiming to the world that you have indeed been born again, that you have died, the old man, the sinful man that hated God has died and a new man has been raised.

Let me ask you a question. Does your style of life reflect biblical Christianity? Because my dear friend, if it does not. You should be afraid now, some of you might come to me and say, well, brother Paul, I'm struggling with sin and I'm praying over the unrighteousness in my life, and sometimes I just think I'm so that's not a bad thing.

That's a good thing, because only an awakened heart, a regenerate heart does such things. But what I'm talking about is the person. I understand some of you.

I am not about bringing in tons of people into a church and having everything wrapped around the church just to make the speaker look good. And there's some of you who may not be able to participate much in this congregation, apart from coming on Sunday morning. I don't want to judge you for that because I don't know you.

If I knew you, maybe I would judge you. But let me ask you something, if if the bulk of your Christianity is coming to church on Sunday morning and that's about it, you need to be terrified. And I don't care what anybody else has told you.

You need to be terrified. If the world is a greater influence in your life and shaping your character and your actions more than the presence of Jesus Christ and the word of Jesus Christ, you need to be terrified.

Why terrified? Because we're talking about life and destruction.

Now, where are you? Where are you? Where are you right now? I am a man who has been released from a burden. I have said that the Lord wanted me to say there are going to be some elders who are going to be up here in the front. You need to talk to me.

I'll I'll I'll be around. Look for me. My brother is going to come up and sing.

And I want you to know something. It's an open invitation. If you know you are not a Christian, then come forward and talk to us.

We'll go back over here somewhere and we will talk. It's not that coming forward saves you. Not at all.

But if you need help, come when you need help. You come to somebody. We'll come to somebody.

But I want to tell you something else, dear Saint and dear sinner. If if you're intimidated to come up here, you're afraid to come up here. You know, you hear people say, well, if you deny him, you know, in front of people, he'll that that's not what that verse means.

If you're afraid to come up here, then you catch me when I'm going out the door. You pull me aside somewhere or one of these elders and we'll talk to you. If there is enough flicker of a flame in you to say, I need help, that's enough.

If you have to grab us when we're getting in our car, do so, do so. I'm going to pray and then ask that someone take over the meeting. Father, I pray and ask that you would do an eternal work in the lives of many people.

In Jesus name, amen. Stand with us. You've heard the truth.

Maybe you don't know whether God is speaking to you or not. Well, I'll just tell you this. If there is the slightest desire, intonation in your heart, that's the Holy Spirit speaking.

And these fellows are here and we're just going to wait a few moments. Robert's going to sing. Do you have any sense at all that God is dealing with you? An internal voice.

You just have a longing. There's something happening. You don't know what it is.

That's all right. We'll be right here just for the next few moments to talk to you if you need to. So you just bow your heads prayerfully.

I know thou art for thee all the Father's sake. I resign, gracious Redeemer, my Savior, our God, we favor.

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