

## 2 Corinthians 4:3-7

Sunday 6/24/2012

Well, if you have your Bibles this morning, we want to turn to, to start out with anyhow, back to 2 Corinthians chapter 4. I told you last week, and really have kept it before you through our whole time in 2 Corinthians, we are really trying to build a team of men and women who will grasp the principles of dealing with people in the issues of their lives and helping them apply the principles. Of course, we know that that starts with us.

The last couple of weeks we have been dealing with what I really consider the downside of ministry, and that is understanding and talking about why people that come to church, this church or really any church, only come for a short while and then fall by the wayside and do not make it. Last week we saw the great principle of how Satan blinds us to the Gospel. These are things that you really need to know and understand, not only for your own life, but for in dealing with people.

We saw a number of things that kind of broke this down. We saw a great study on the great lights in the Bible; there are two of them. God is the light, He is the true light, and then the Bible says that Satan is a false light. We studied the difference between light and darkness, and we saw how John 1:5 said how the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. We saw in Genesis where the light was called day and the darkness was called night, and we know now that that is not talking about the first day or night in the Bible; that is talking about the two personalities, God who is light and the devil who is darkness.

But then I showed you, and we took the time, and this is probably a real key thing and it is a great study in the Bible, how that even though the devil is darkness, the Bible says that he transforms himself into an angel of light. That darkness is a false light, is a false darkness that blinds people to the Gospel. We saw how that this false light will blind men and women to the truth. He does it two ways.

The first way we saw was through the world system. We have all met people in our lives, no matter where we are at, that think that the world is better than Christianity. We find that in saved people's lives and we find that in unsaved people's lives. There are many saved people out there that are probably going to go to Heaven because they are truly born again, but they have fallen by along the side, and now they really think that the world is better. It is one of the things, and I preached on this last week, it is one of the things that destroys people.

The second one was religion. Religion is something the devil uses, and the Bible talks about spiritual wickedness in high places. The great example of that is in the book of Matthew chapter 23 where he takes to task the scribes and the Pharisees. We see there that Satan's main sphere is religion. He has the world system and he damns people and blinds them through that, but he does not miss anything and he also uses religion. It is an amazing thing.

We saw that also that there are two aspects to the Gospel, and this is very important. This is where he blinds man. We saw the first place was the Gospel received, and that is your salvation. That is the day that you trust Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior. We believe here and

teach here what the Bible teaches, that joining a church will not save you. Many religions out there, false religions, think that if you just join a church that will get you to Heaven.

You see in our little, we are talking about baptism, and I talked about how that so many of our kids here are going to get baptized, and that is because they have come to the point in their life where they trusted Christ as their own personal Savior. They got to be eight or nine years old, ten years old, and they saw how that thing works. We do not believe that baptism saves you. Baptism just gets you wet, but there are many churches out there that actually teach that if you go forward and get baptized, no matter where, a baby or a young child or even an adult, that that kind of washes away your sin. There is only one thing that washes away your sin, and that is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son. Baptism is not a form of salvation. Baptism, I always looked at baptism like a wedding ring. If you wear a wedding ring, it does not make you married, but it illustrates to everybody that you are married, and that is exactly what baptism does. It does not save you, but baptism is the public identification of what has taken place spiritually inside you.

The Gospel received is salvation, and the devil, we saw how the devil blinds man to the truth of that salvation by using the world system and religion. Then we talked about how that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

The second aspect we looked at was the Gospel fulfilled. Where the Gospel received is for unsaved people, the Gospel fulfilled is for saved people, you and me. The devil will blind saved people just like he blinds unsaved people. He blinds unsaved people from getting saved. He blinds saved people from doing anything with it after they get saved. God's people are blinded again by this false light. We talked about all of that last week. The same things that blind an unsaved man, the devil takes and uses and blinds the saved man. The world, religion, drugs, alcohol, pride, self-righteousness, they will be the same thing that mess up a saved person that will mess up an unsaved person. The only difference is that a saved person is headed to Heaven and an unsaved person is going to Hell.

You remember I gave you the simplest format. How profound this is is found in its simplicity. The two basic formats by which the devil operates:

1. If you are here this morning and you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior, what do I mean by that? Have you ever had a time in your life where somebody opened up a Bible and showed you that you are a sinner, showed you that God died for you, and then showed you the Bible path process for you to become a Christian? If you have never done that, the devil's job is to keep you from ever doing that. He will blind you with the things of the world, the things of life, whatever. He will blind you to that. In that, he gets your soul in Hell.
2. But some of you, as myself, you got through that and you actually trusted Christ as your own personal Savior. Now the devil's plan shifts. He knows now he can never get your soul in Hell because if you are truly saved, you are God's child. But what he does know is this: even though he cannot get you in Hell, if he can blind you to the fulfillment of that Gospel message, even though you will go to Heaven, chances are your kids will wind up in Hell, your friends will wind up in Hell, and all of the people in your life. I have seen moms and

dads who have gotten saved and then fell back into this thing and never fulfilled the Gospel. The tragedy of tragedies in my mind would be for mom and dad to go to Heaven and the children to be lost and go to the lake of fire simply because the parents never carried it any farther than receiving the Gospel.

The devil's plan is twofold and it is very simple. If he cannot get you, he wants to get your soul in Hell. If he cannot do that because you got saved, then he will let you go to Heaven but get everybody else around that you would have reached if you would have done what is right in fulfilling the Gospel. It is just that simple.

We saw the great principle of our body as an earthen vessel and in that lies the great treasure, the light of God. That light of God is in our hearts and it shines out in our face. This is really what the ministry is. It is taking the light that God has given to you and given to somebody else.

Now that is what we talked about last week in kind of a collective way. Today I want to read again for you what I read last week in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 so we can establish a base here and then we are going to move out. I am going to show you another aspect of it today.

## I. The Gospel Hid and the Treasure in Earthen Vessels

But let us read again this passage. It says this:

*2 Corinthians 4:3-7*

*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:*

*In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

*For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*

*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*

Now Father, we do thank you today. We thank you for those that are here. We pray Father that you will take the time that we have set aside and give us what we need today. Let the Word of God be true today. Let it be clear and let it touch the hearts of these your people. Lord, there may be someone here today that does not know the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior. There may be somebody here today that is saved but they are confused on the whole thing. Let us help them, Father. Let us do what the job of the church is, and that is to clarify and bring people out of the darkness into the light. We will thank you and praise you in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

## II. Understanding Why People Reject the Gospel

Now today, before we leave this passage of why men reject the Gospel in both formats, the Gospel received and the Gospel fulfilled, I will talk about again, like we said last week, why you and I in dealing with people will spend enormous amounts of time with people who will simply at some point turn around and go back to the world and drop everything that they have gotten up to that point. That is one of the great enigmas in Christianity. It is one of the great mysteries that most pastors and most people who work with people struggle with. But yet the Bible is very clear.

Let me tell you something. God does not want you just to get in there and then work with people and have people reject it and walk away with you not understanding why that is. I think it is vitally important that you and I realize why that is. I will tell you why, because most of the people you are going to deal with in the day and age that we live in, you are going to see it today. They are simply not going to do what God wants them to do. Today I want to talk to you about looking at that on the inside.

### III. The Wizard of Oz Analogy

One of my favorite movies that I grew up with was *The Wizard of Oz*. I love *The Wizard of Oz* simply because of the fact that *The Wizard of Oz* is a great movie, made all the way back in the 1930s. It is a story about, believe it or not, Kansas. Dorothy lived on a farm in Kansas, and she gets taken up in a tornado and transformed, placed into this place which is an incredible place. She is trying to get back.

Yet I see so many parallels to the Bible in that story because you have the good fairy, got to be careful with that word today, and then you have the bad fairy. In other words, you have a system of light versus darkness. She wants to get back to where she is from, and the only way she can get back to everything is on a yellow brick road. In other words, every time she strayed off that yellow brick road, she got into trouble. There was opposition along that because the good fairy wanted to help her get there, but the bad fairy wanted to keep her from getting there. The bad fairy, if you remember the story, had her own little guys. The whole thing is a picture of God and the light versus darkness with the demonic forces there.

Then you have the wizard. Everybody was off to see the wizard. It was an amazing story. The thing about it, and I do not know if you know that in that movie, a guy who was one of the Munchkin guys or somebody actually hung himself in that movie. If you watch the right scene, you can see him jump off the thing and hang himself on the scene behind the scene. It is incredible. It is worth it to look for that. I do not mean that I am sorry the guy died, but it is a true story. If you like movie trivia, there it is, go find a guy that hung himself in *The Wizard of Oz*.

But the best part of it for me is when she goes to that Emerald City, like the New Jerusalem, and all this fire and everything, and she goes before this great wizard. What happens is, and you might know Toto is the one who breaks the story, but they are all in awe of this. She has got the Tin Man, the Wolf Man, and the Lion guy. They are all out there, and they are all there in great care, this fire, breathing smoke, all this stuff that is going on around him. Then little Toto goes over and pulls back the curtain. Behind the curtain is a man, just a normal man, pulling all the

levers and doing all the things and flipping all the switches that is giving the illusion that all this stuff is happening.

I am telling you something, life is a lot like that. What I do with the Bible and what the Bible does for you, it pulls back the curtain and lets you see that everything that is out there that makes you afraid, everything that out there that intimidates you, when the Bible does is pull back that curtain and show you what is really going on. Now, that is what I am going to do today. I am going to pull back the curtain. Last week I talked about it on the outside looking in. Now I am going to talk about the inside looking out. I am going to take you on the inside to one of probably the greatest passages in the Bible. I want to show you from the inside looking out. I want to take you behind that veil, behind that curtain. I want you to see how this thing really works. If you are going to work with people or maybe you are struggling today, this message will be for you.

#### IV. The Parable of the Sower: Four Case Studies

If you would take your Bibles and turn to Matthew chapter 13. I do not know what you know about the Bible, but Matthew chapter 13 starts the great parables in the Bible. Most people do not understand about the parables. A lot of preachers today teach you that the parables are really just have general truth in them. They are kind of a mystery thing that you really cannot get any stuff out of it. That is not true. The parables teach an exact infallible truth that impacts every part of our life in the format, doctrinally, inspirationally, and historically.

If you look at Matthew chapter 13, if you know anything about the book of Matthew at all, you would know now that up to chapter 12, the nation of Israel makes their final rejection. Christ is come. He has identified himself. He has proven to them, the nation of Israel, who He is. Now at this point, at this point in chapter 12, Israel makes its rejection of the Messiah. Immediately at that point from 13 on, the message of the kingdom up to this point, even very clear and very forthright, now it goes into a mystery called the parables. So because people do not understand how the book of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John lays itself out, they get caught up into this, and now they think that, oh, there is some great—no, no, no. Using the keys of the Bible, you will see it today. The book of the parables are the parables, and there are 12 of them in the Gospels, one for each tribe in the nation of Israel. You are going to find that they are the most incredible, direct, doctrinal material that you need, not only to understand God dealing with Israel in a future tense, but God dealing with Israel in a historical sense, but then God in you and my life as a practical sense. Never forget the parallels between the nation of Israel and us as Christians. I know that there is an Old Testament and a New Testament is separated too, but the parallels, the spiritual applications are quite incredible.

Now within this story, and I am going to read it here for you in a moment, you are going to find four types of people, four types of people. To me, putting this in a Bible counseling format, I am going to give you four case studies today. I am going to give you four people that represent four case studies of why people from the inside looking out reject the Gospel and reject the fulfillment of the Gospel. One of the most incredible things that you are ever going to get into. Every person you are going to ever sit down with, every person that you are going to begin to open the Bible with and to help will be one of these four. It is amazing insight for you who desire

to have a work with people and do what God has called you to do in helping people through life's issues.

Well, let us read it here, Matthew chapter 13. It says:

*Matthew 13:1-9*

*The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.*

*And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.*

*And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;*

*And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:*

*Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:*

*And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*

*And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:*

*But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.*

*Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Now draw your attention to verse 9. I think verse 9 is probably the key to this whole thing. It says, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Everybody got ears this morning? Then hear this. I found in my life in the Bible that there are only a couple of places where the Bible says if you got ears, you better listen. In every case I found out there is a tremendous amount of information that will help you and spare you from some of the tragedies in life. One of them is here, and the other one is found in the Revelation where it talks about the churches. "He that hath ears, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Churches do not listen. God's people do not listen. So I admonish you this morning before we even get into this that if you have got a pair of ears and they are working today, then listen to what is being said today because this is very important.

Now this particular parable is found in three of the Gospels. You want to make some notes of this. It is found in Matthew, it is found in Mark, and it is found in Luke. It details out for us the case study of four types of people. To really see the impact of this and the full importance of it, we must really get all three accounts together. A lot of this itself is a great study of how you compare Scripture with Scripture to get the answer. The Bible is a great example of why people do not make it, but it is a great example also how that you and I learn things from the Bible by just not studying one place but finding the parallel passages and putting it all together and then make the thing work for you. It is an incredible study.

Now let me jump ahead for a moment here. We read it now. Let me make it easy for you and then we will come back and put it all together. We are going to jump ahead here and get some guidelines for this study.

- First of all, we have a sower. The Bible said a man went forth to sow. Historically, that is Christ because historically this passage is Christ going out to the nation of Israel and giving them the Gospel. Gospel means good news. Inspirationally, that sower is me and you because that is what we do. That is my job as a Christian. Notice I did not say pastor. That is my job as a Christian and it is your job as a Christian if you are saved this morning. You got ears? You hear what I am saying to you. Your job and my job is to be a sower. We have a sower here, and that is you and me.
- Then we have the seed, and the seed is the Word of God. That is what Word is sown. You and I are to go out. That is just the fulfillment of the Gospel.
- Then we have the ground. Well, that is man's heart. The ground will be, as talked about here, will be the heart of man. That the sower sows the seed. Then we have three or four different examples of how the man's heart receives that or does not receive that or receives it for a while and then does not receive it anymore. Great study.
- Then you have the fowls. Of course, we will learn here very quickly that the fowls are the devil himself or the unclean spirits, the fallen angels, however you want to do it, the demons, whatever you want to call them. We will see that here in a moment.

These four keys are really the key to putting this together. With these keys, let us see how this lays itself out, and I will show you from the inside how the blindness works. I want you to see more than just from the outside, well, it is religion or the world. Now I want to take you behind the veil. We want to strip it back and we want to see the levers and the switches that are being pulled in men and women's lives so you understand how to do it.

I told you last week that you are all good people, and the people who in our church, anyhow, I cannot speak for anybody else's. I know that the people who want to do this and work with people, I know that basically fundamentally you are doing it for the right motive and the right reason. I know that. I do not think that I may be wrong in some cases, but if it is, it is a very minute number. I think that most of you who desire to do ministry are doing it because you really love God and what God has done for you. I believe that. Maybe I just blinded myself to it. Maybe you are all three-headed monsters in this for the money or whatever you are trying to get out of it. I do not think so because there is not any money in it.

But anyway, it is a thing where I really appreciate that. I want to give you this because I know because you are good people what happens. I see it all the time in some of you younger Christians. I do not want to say this wrong, but I got to say it. If you got ears, listen to me so you do not hear this wrong. In the ministry of dealing with people, you have to, to some degree, develop a hardness. You have to, to some degree, realize that you cannot do everything for people. Parents have a tough time with this sometimes, and they do too much for their kids, and their kids wind up all messed up, and then they wonder why. Because you spoiled them rotten. You gave them everything. You did everything for them. So when they hit 19 or 20, they do not

know how to function. As a parent, you need to find that balance. But in ministry, you will also need to find that balance.

Now I am sympathetic to everybody, and I feel sorry for people's problems, but I also have to draw the line that some people got into those problems because of the choices they made. Me taking away those bad choices and just giving them a blanket pass does not really help them. Sometimes you have to develop that line where you realize that you cannot cross that. You love the person. You want to help the person, but they have got to learn. We all have histories in our lives, and we all have parts of those histories that we are all not proud of. I never judge a person by what they have done in the past. More than I want somebody to judge me what I have done in the past or you have done in the past, but at the same time, you cannot fit your past, but you can take complete charge of your future. This is where you got to help people and understand that not everybody is going to make it.

The first thing that happens because you are good people is you blame yourself. You think, well, I did not do something. If I had done this, if I had done that, if I would have done this, you know what? Some people are just dead to the Gospel. I have never heard an undertaker after he buried somebody said, well, I wish that I had done this to him. He would have looked better. I wish we would have fixed it this way. The guy is dead. Some of God's people are just dead to the Gospel. We will find out why. We will look behind the scenes and we will see. With these four keys here, you are going to find how it all lays out that the Gospel received and the Gospel fulfilled. I can tell you this. Ready? You are saved or you are lost this morning. Everybody in this room fits into one of these four. If you are honest enough, you can find yourself. If you are dishonest, you will probably miss your match yourself up. It does not matter.

Now let me show you. I read you the parable. Now let me, I am not going to waste time reading the other three as it lays itself out because it is the same. What I want to focus on is the answer because he gives three distinct answers, and you are going to see how each one builds on the other. When you put all these three together, wow, you get a tremendous aspect. Notice the process. He tells the parable. He lays the parable out, and then later on in another chapter, he goes through and he interprets that passage for you and it gives you all the things you need to know.

## V. The Three Interpretations of the Parable

Let us look at answer number one. We read Matthew chapter 13, verses 1 through 8. Now let us look at the first answer.

*Matthew 13:18-23*

*Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.*

*When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*

*But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;*

*Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*

*He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

*But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

All right, that is answer number one. You notice how he goes right down through here, and you ought to be marking these in your Bible and the little things down through there.

Now here is answer number two. It will add more light to it.

*Mark 4:13-20*

*And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?*

*The sower soweth the word.*

*And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*

*And these are they likewise 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 ariseth 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 world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*

*And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.*

Now you see how he added more to it? Now when you compare one and two, and you break these things down, you get more of a picture, you get more of an insight.

Well here comes the third one. This will be in Luke chapter 8, verse 11. The second one is in Mark chapter 4, verse 13, if I did not give it to you. The first one is in Matthew chapter 13, verse 18.

*Luke 8:11-15*

*Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.*

*Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*

*They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*

*And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.*

*But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

Now that is another key in there. We did not have that before. "Honest and a good heart." Having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit, ah, fruit with what? Fruit with patience. So we have fruit unto perfection, and then we have fruit, we did not get that in the other two. Each one adds light and defines better the last one. So you have to get all three accounts together to glean the full impact. Now this is called in your Bible study, comparing Scripture with Scripture to get the answer. This is how it works.

## VI. Case Study 1: The Wayside Hearer

Now for you potential people who want to work with people, I have broken this down into four case studies. We are going to approach each one of these as a case study. I am going to show you how each one of these works, and lay it out for you from the inside looking out. Last week we stopped from the outside looking in. Now I am going to take you on the inside, take you behind the scene so to speak.

All right, now let us look at case study number one. The Bible says a sower went forth to sow. We know now that that is you and me. These seeds are sown by the wayside. All right, now let us look at the parallel verses here and break it down so we can glean from this.

*Matthew 13:19*

*When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.*

*Mark 4:15*

*And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*

*Luke 8:12*

*Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*

Now in this case study here, the Bible says in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8, that the devil comes and takes the seed before it has a chance. You are going to deal with people like this. I

want to explain what kind of people these are, but you are going to find them. I think it is interesting as a side note to notice Matthew 13:4, it said the fowls come. Yet the other place says the wicked one, verse 19, and then Satan, and then the devil. That shows you that it is not the devil himself that does it, because the fowls or the unclean spirits that are all around us that the Bible tells us from various places in the Bible is where the spiritual wickedness is. But it shows you that they do exactly what the devil tells him to do. The devil never comes down and attacks you, but he is given the credit for it because the ones that do, the fowls, the unclean spirits, and I suggest that right there you put in Revelation 18:2, Ecclesiastes 10:20, Isaiah 34:10, and Ezekiel 31:6. Those are places in your Bible that tell you and show you that birds in the Bible are like in the demonic spirits.

So the fowls come down. It is like you are going out in the wintertime and throwing breadcrumbs out on the deal, and all the birds come down. It is like that. It is like going to the lake and there is a bunch of geese and you take a bunch of bread and bug it up and you throw it on the water and all the geese come to it. Think of that. That is exactly what happens with this type of person. They come on Sunday morning. They hear the Word of God at 10:30. By quarter to 11, it is come down and taken out of their heart. There is a reason for that. There is a reason why this kind of person will not make it. You need to understand this.

Now the key word in this for me is the word wayside. The Bible says in Proverbs 21:16, "The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead." Psalms 140:5 says, "The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the way side; they have set gins for me. Selah." You know what the wayside represents in this particular case? Off the beaten track. There are no tricks and traps of the devil as long as you stay on the right path. We call our church Old Path Baptist Church. Many people do not understand why that is. I always think when you meet somebody and you tell them what the name of your church is, I can almost deduce a moment immediately their spiritual mentality rather than understand what my name is because it is found in Jeremiah 6:16. It is a Bible thing. When you say, sometimes you will say, "What is the name of your church?" "Old Path Baptist Church." "Oh yeah, Old Path Baptist Church. That is good. Jeremiah chapter 6." Sometimes they will say, "What? Old what? Old patch?" At that point, I know they know nothing about the Bible, especially in the Old Testament.

Now why do we pick Old Path Baptist Church? Because the Bible says in that passage that you and I are to look for the old path. The old path is the biblical path. But you do not stay on a biblical path. You know what you get? By the wayside. The devil can never get you as long as you stay on the path. It is the side trips you take that get you. You have got to realize that. So this concept here, the wayside, is very important. It is off the main track. It is somebody completely in any form has no spiritual aspect of their lives. The Bible talks about paths of righteousness. This person by the wayside, this case study number one, it is a man or a woman who is completely off the beaten track. They have no real aspect of anything about God in their life. You are going to meet people like that, especially in the world we live in.

I think that concept of the wayside is best explained and maybe understood in the object lesson of the United States of America today. The United States of America is just like that. Carefree,

completely void of any morality. Completely void of any truth. Man, we are Isaiah 5 where right has become wrong and wrong has become right. In our country today, every unsaved man, I heard this on the news several times and I have mentioned to you, they categorize America and where she is at as being in a post-Christian era. That is absolutely true. You know why that is? It is not because of unsaved people. It is because of God's people. It is because of God's people that America has entered that area, a complete breakdown of any moral standard. A nation made up of people and people that you are going to deal with completely devoid of any conscience of right or wrong. In fact, the Bible says over there in 1 Timothy 4:2 that there are people who sear their conscience with a hot iron. They absolutely have no moral compass in their life. That is America. That is a picture of America as a nation that is by the wayside. They are not on the path anymore. They are not even around the path. They are not even a parking lot where you park to walk on the path. They are absolutely completely gone.

You know what? This is the kind of people that he is talking about here. In dealing with people like this, this will be your third level. This will be, as I broke them down for you in a medical format, this will be heart transplants and brain surgery. This will be satanic strongholds in people's lives. This is where people cannot break the chains of the bondage that they have put themselves in. This is where you will find severe emotional issues that people go through depression and are brought in great anxiety. It is all brought about by a life of bad choices that culminate into a mess that absolutely spells disaster anyway you look at it.

Think of a hockey game. At a hockey game, you have got two opposing teams and they have got a little puck. Think of the puck as a Gospel puck, the seed. When you are down there fighting that thing, in your case you are trying to score. You are trying to get that puck into the net and get some points. Think of it as a Gospel. Well, the greatest goalie you ever saw in your life is the devil himself. He blocks anything from getting in. But he can only block it because people have put themselves in that kind of scenario.

A satanic stronghold would be a drug abuse or addiction. A drug abuse and addiction come to the place where, it is a great trick. Everybody thinks when they start taking drugs, I am going to do it because it makes me cool or I am going to do it for this. You kids need to hear this today. Let me tell you something. I do not care what you start with or what you do. It is always going to be a gateway that is going to lead it down the line. You say, "Well, my doctor does not say so." Forget your doctor. It is the devil who is going to make sure that happens because it is a spiritual thing. It is not about, well, drugs make me high or drugs ruin my brain cells or drugs do this. It is not about that. It is the thing that the devil blinds you that drugs will send you to Hell because it will put you in a bondage that you cannot get the seed. I have seen it with gambling addictions. I have seen people get so hung up on gambling that they cannot do anything else. Every dime they get. It is true of pornography. There is a pornography addiction, alcohol addiction. I am telling you, get to the place where you cannot function as a normal human being and nothing that anybody says can penetrate because that is where you put yourself. The devil completely controls every aspect of your life and takes the word out of your heart through the addiction that you have. That is why I am telling you that we are all out of beatings and you all ought to have an addiction. But

the best addiction you ever have is the one found in 1 Corinthians 16:15, which says they were addicted to the ministry. That is a good one.

But a satanic stronghold completely controls your mind and your flesh, and it is given over to the devil and his devices. We have the word alcoholic. We use that word a lot. Workaholic, alcoholic. Most people do not even understand the roots of those two words. Alcohol, holy. In other words, alcoholic is someone who is wholly given to alcohol. That is how it works. Wholly given to alcohol. It takes everything in your life, every brain cell you got, everything that you try to focus on, everything you try to do gets pulled right back to that addiction. You know why? Because the devil takes the seed out. You have created yourself and put yourself in a scenario, case number one, where that seed cannot ever get in because the devil just stands there and pulls it away because of where we put ourselves.

Now I am going to tell you, these are very hard to deal with, and you are going to find a lot of people do not make it. If they do make it, there is only one way they make it. Now let me say this to you. I have had a lot of people said, "Well, I made it." My point is this. I am not talking about you made it and you do not do it anymore. I am talking about if you made it and you are not serving God and doing what you are doing, you have not made it. I am not talking about making it on your terms. I am talking about making it on the Bible's terms. If you are saved, God saved you for a reason. You received the Gospel to fulfill the Gospel. If you got past your addiction and you are not fulfilling it, you have not gone anywhere. You have been blinded again. There is a specific format that has to be fulfilled for somebody that gets into those scenarios, and most people just cannot do it. I have said it before. You come in here and get the Word of God at 10:30, the devil takes it out by quarter to 11 because of what you have got on the inside. So our first case study is seed sown by the wayside. We see now that this is a person who it cannot get through. The stronghold of his life blocks out everything that God tries to do.

You are saying, and I know people say, "Well, why does not God override that?" God is not going to override those things. It is like a woman, a girl goes out and she gets herself pregnant and then she gets right with God and she says, "God is not going to come down and terminate your pregnancy." You are not going to smoke for 100 years and then get lung cancer and God is going to come down and give you new lungs because you get saved. There are consequences to what we do and the choices that we make, and the more bad choices you make, you build yourself into these scenarios. God will get you out, but He is not getting you out of your way. You got yourself in it your way. I have told you before, you can only change your direction in life, and you cannot change it with the same thinking that got you into that problem. So this is a very tough one, but it can be done.

## VII. Case Study 2: The Stony Ground Hearer

Now our case study number two, it says:

*Matthew 13:5-6*

*Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:*

*And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*

Now this is Matthew chapter 13, verses 5 through 6, and we read here. Now here we have a perfect example of basically what you are going to deal with with people 99% of the time you deal with them. It is going to be this one right here. But you need to understand how it works. The Bible says that there is not much earth, stony places. They grow a little bit, but then the sun comes up and it gets hot and they are gone. Now the key to this is found in verse 6. The key to this understanding is why this problem is, is because they do not have any roots. They get no roots down.

It is like a tree. You can plant a tree in your backyard on Arbor Day, and your tree is down there, and for one or two or three or four or five years, you want to move the tree, you can. That tree is there 10 years, you will never move it. You as a child of God every day of your life ought to get your roots down deeper. When the Bible talks about unmovable, when the Bible talks about Paul talks about "I will not be moved." When the Bible talks about that he is fixed, that he is standing, that he is on the promises. When the Bible talks about Christ being legs like pillars of marble, this is what he is talking about. Your roots are down and you are not going to move off of what happens when the Word of God says it. But people do not get there.

Now watch how Mark 4 and Luke chapter 8 lay this out. Let us start with Matthew.

*Matthew 13:20-21*

*But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;*

*Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*

*Mark 4:16-17*

*And these are they likewise 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 ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.*

*Luke 8:13*

*They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*

See, I got to get all that together. Now this is one that shows us another type of person that we are going to see all the time. I mean, these are the kind of people, this is why some people come, they get saved. They are absolutely ecstatic for two or three weeks, two or three months, maybe even a year. I have seen some of this go on for two or three years, and they are happy and everything, but they never get any roots down. They never get what they need.

I am going to tell you something. You can only exist so long coming to church, enjoying the music, enjoying the sermons, enjoying all the social things, enjoying the people. At some point, brother, you have got to crack that book and you have got to get your roots down. If you do not, this is exactly where you head, and this is why some people simply will not do it. There is a great pull on all of us when you first get saved. You know what it is? It is the world. I told you last week, you have got to forsake the world. You have got to let it go. But if you do not replace it with something else, i.e., church, i.e., the Bible, and get what you need, you know what? You will go right back to the world. You say, "Well, I am not going back to those drugs, I am not going back to this, I am not going back to that." No, you will not. You will just stay where you are at and do nothing. You will not go back to the world, but you will not fulfill the Gospel. It is the same thing. God saved you. You received the Gospel to fulfill the Gospel. That is how it works.

All right, now, we have seen it all the time. This is, this is, this one shows us what you deal with all the time. You come and you get saved and you are happy about it. Oh, you are thrilled about it. Oh, you are even great. I mean, you are just wonderful about it. But you get no roots down in the Bible, no foundation in the Bible, no basic principles down. The Bible says, notice the four key words: tribulation, persecution, affliction, and temptation. Mark 4:17 says, "you endure for a while." Sure you do. You come to church, you get involved, you come to this, you come to all the things we do, you play softball and all that, but there is simply no evidence of getting into that book. So when the persecution for the Word's sake, Mark 4:17, or tribulation comes in your life, or persecution comes in your life, or affliction comes in your life, or temptation when you get lonely because you do not have a girlfriend or you get lonely because you do not have a boyfriend, or the old boyfriend calls, or the old girlfriend calls, it is going to go exactly back to what it was because you have no roots.

Here it comes. This is why we have discipleship. This is why when you get saved, you need to be discipled. It is the beginning lay down of the root system. This is why I developed the prayer groups. It is an accountability group. It is your root system. This is why we have Bible basics. This is why we do Thursday night Bible study. This is why I let you ask any question you want to ask. This is why we have Sunday morning, and I do what I do the way I do it in my style of teaching. This is why I offer you one-on-one to come over to my home. You think I just do it because I am a nice guy and I love people? Well, that all may be true, and it certainly is true, but I want to tell you the truth. Everything I do is for one purpose. That is to get you rooted because I know this. If you do not get rooted, you are going to get routed. It is that simple.

*Colossians 2:7*

*Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

Three aspects in you getting rooted:

- Rooted in the Word of God
- Leads to you getting built up in the Word of God
- Leads to you being established in the Word of God

I talked to you before about another aspect. I talked about getting sound doctrine, what leads to a sound mind, what gives you sound words, what produces sound speech, which produces a sound faith. That is rooted. I have seen the process a million times, and there are about 10 or 15 different variations to it. We will talk about it in the first of the year. People come and get saved. They get all fired up. They start discipleship, get in a prayer group. They will start meeting with somebody because they got some problems, but you will not do anything with the Word of God yourself.

I cannot bring back... If I was a medical technician or a doctor or a nurse or somebody that was an EMT, you are laying there and you are almost dead, but as long as there is life, there is a good chance to bring you back. I do not have the ability nor does anybody else to bring back dead people. You have to help yourself. You have to make some good choices in your own life. You have to start doing things that are the right things to do. Then we got something to work with. Just because you get in a prayer group does not make you a prayer warrior. Just because you get into a discipleship lesson does not mean you are going to get rooted. People like Walton bought you a set of mechanic tools does not mean you are going to be a mechanic. You have got to use and get down what you are getting. People will not do that.

Then they come to a point in their life. I mean, they start out where they would not miss Sunday for anything in the world. Thursday night Bible study is the most important time of their week. You see, then the Bible says they endure for a little while. See it? I see it all the time. Then suddenly Bible study stops. That is always the first to go. I have never figured out why that is, but it is always the first thing to go where before nothing kept you. Now you have got a million excuses why you cannot be here. It is always the first to go. It is always the thing that goes for it. When I start to see that, brother, I am saying, hey, case study number two. Then you start missing your prayer groups. All your excuses are legitimate. You have got kids, you have got this, you have got a husband, you have got to get up, you have got all of those stuff. Hey, leave Boaz in bed if that is what it takes. You had to be here last week to fully appreciate that. Then your discipleship is no longer as important. You did a little bit, but now you are not doing it. You are not into the Bible. You do not come to Thursday night anymore. You are not writing down anybody thinking the Bible, and it just kind of goes. Then you know what happens? It just follows the process. Then Sunday goes, then you miss once a month, then in time about three or four months, then it is two a month. Then you get here once a month, and then about after six months or eight months or a year or something like that, you are going out the door.

Case study number two happens all the time. You know why? Because you are not willing to get rooted. If you are not willing to get rooted, you are not going anywhere. Well, you are, but you are not going anywhere here. I mean, this is the most common. You have got to get rooted. You have got to get built up. You have got to get established. You got ears this morning? "He that has ears, let him hear." See how important that is?

I am going to tell you something right now. I am going to be a prophet. Some of you right now today have turned your head to that exit sign back there. You have turned your heart to that door. Oh yeah, you are here this morning and all of those things, but you are as dead as a doornail on the inside. You give the minimum, you do the minimum or you do nothing. You have got right

now, as you are standing here in your heart, your heart has turned toward the door and the exit sign. In six months or less, you will be gone if something does not change. You know why? Because it is infallible. The book says you will be gone. The book says that when you do not get rooted and grounded, you can endure. When the tribulation comes, when the persecution hits you, when the affliction comes or the temptation comes, you are gone. Because the only thing that is going to change your thinking of the way you are and what got you into the mess is to get rooted in that book. It does not happen.

So some fell upon stony places where they had not much earth. And forthwith they sprung up because they had no deepness of earth. When the sun was up, they were scorched. Oh, they were happy when they got saved. Through a process of time and more bad choices, the joy of their salvation leaves because the joy of your salvation is not based on being here on Sunday morning or Thursday night. The joy of your salvation that brings you here on Sunday morning or Thursday night, what God is doing in your life and the Word of God Monday through Friday.

## VIII. Case Study 3: The Thorny Ground Hearer

Case study number three.

*Matthew 13:7*

*And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them.*

Now again, look at our three answers to this in Matthew 13:22, Mark 4:18, and Luke 8:14.

*Matthew 13:22*

*He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.*

*Mark 4:18-19*

*And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,*

*And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.*

*Luke 8:14*

*And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.*

The indication is here that a guy got saved, was actually bringing fruit. That is the indication. But there is one key phrase in here that is found in all three of them. This will be the problem, and I preached on this last week, the cares of this world. I told you last week, if you do not dump the world in your life when you get saved, if you do not get the people in this world out of your life and you do not make a break and you do not get into the Word of God and get your roots down and change your life, it is going to come back and get you. This is why people do not make it. They will not let the world go. You get in one bad relationship, you get into another bad

relationship with the same kind of bozo you had the last time, and then you walk around wondering why, and then you lose everything that God has for you. You lose everything that God wanted to do with you. Your life now is so caught up and cluttered with all that garbage and junk, you cannot ever get to the fulfilling of the Gospel.

I will tell you what, three times he says the cares of this world. Well, he says that twice, and then he says the pleasures of this life, that is the world. Then he says the deceitfulness of riches, and he becomes unfruitful. But all he says down through here and he became unfruitful. It looks like, as I said, there was a time when he bore fruit. You know what? There was a time in some of your lives when you bore fruit for God, was there not? Sure there was. Sitting here this morning, I hope God points that out to you. It was a time in your life when you actually did something for God. There was an actual time in your life when you actually meant something for God. It was a time in your life when you actually stepped out and did something and was faithful in it for God. Where are you today? The reason why you are going to deal with people, and some of you are in the states you are in, this is the case study. This is going behind the scenes. This shows you exactly why you are where you are at today. No way around it. You see, as dealing with people and me as a minister, these are things we need to know. I call these things the cause and the effect. I preached on this exact same thing last week for you for forsaking the world. I told you totally obey and utterly destroy. I showed you the examples in Judges and Joshua why Israel got the same problem, never could get out of it. For you and me.

Now look at Luke 8:14, one of the most powerful verses in all the Bible that tells you you can have a fruit, you can do things for God, but if you do not sell out it does not count. He says, "the pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." Fruit to perfection. Boy, that is a powerful thing. You see, God is not interested in Jesus bringing forth fruit. God is bringing fruit to perfection. My advice to you is to take the next 10 years and figure out what that is.

The Bible teaches that book from Romans 10:9-10, and salvation affects you in three ways. It affects you in your head. It affects you in your heart, and it better affects you in your feet. In other words, you get it into your mind, you get it into your soul, when you get it into your body, and then you do something with it. The perfecting, the perfecting fruit.

## IX. Case Study 4: The Good Ground Hearer

Then we come to finally case study number four. We have looked at three of them now, and finally in case study number four, we find some good things here. He says in Matthew 13:8:

*Matthew 13:8*

*But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.*

Finally, finally get to the person or the people who will not just receive the Gospel but they are going to also fulfill it. Well, let us look at our three companion passages.

*Matthew 13:23*

*But he that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

*Mark 4:20*

*And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.*

*Luke 8:15*

*But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

You know he just summed up what our problem is right now this morning, the bottom line every one of these, an honest and a good heart. You see, you have got to get honest with yourself first and then you have got to get your heart right. If you do not get honest with yourself and get your heart right, it is the key to the whole thing. That is exactly where God's people are at today. Exactly the foolishness that goes on. This is why people have bad marriage after bad marriage after bad marriage. They say, "Well, I have been to church, I go to church." You know what? It is not about going to church. It is what is going on in your rotten heart right now. It is what is going on in your life of not getting rooted in the Word of God and not fulfilling it. That is the key. That is the key. Boy, I will tell you what, that is a powerful thing.

I want you to know the good ground. The good ground is man's heart, remember? This person prepared his heart. This person got grounded in the Word of God. This person got rooted in the Word of God, and this person brings forth fruit, and it is fruit to perfection.

You know Ephesians chapter 4 is really a key on that perfection deal where it talks about it:

*Ephesians 4:11-12*

*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

Then 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says:

*2 Timothy 3:16-17*

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

*That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

You see, that is where the perfect fruit starts, the perfecting of your heart, the taking the Word of God into your heart, letting it fall on the ground of your heart and receiving it with an honest and open and good heart. That is the key.

Now this last case study shows us probably one of the greatest studies in the New Testament teaching on the three types of Christians. This Bible lays us out and breaks it down to such a degree that it is unbelievable. I have shown you four case studies now of why people do what they do in rejecting and not ever going or why they quit coming. Everybody in here, everybody that used to sit in a seat that is no longer here, everybody, some of you sitting today that will not be back next week or you are on your way out, the exit sign is already on your forehead because of the fact that you are simply going to know what the Bible says. It will be one of these right here. Sometimes a combination of them, but it is right there. It is right there.

This last case study shows you the tremendous impact of three types of Christians. But before I give you those, let me put this whole thing in a perspective for you. As you come through these four case studies, you will find that they match up characters in the New Testament.

- We had the first here was the guy who was careless. That would match up to Herod and Pilate in your story in the New Testament because that is how they approach it. Both demon possessed, both part of a false system, and they just blow it off. So our first here in the story here that he is making a reference to would be probably Herod and Pilate.
- Our second guy here would match up to Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8:9-24.
- Our third here would match up to Demas, that is 2 Timothy 4:10, who loved the pleasures of this world.

The fourth one, the one we are looking at right now, represents three classes of Christian fruit bearing. Here is where if you are saved this morning and you are actually involved in ministry and you put yourself in this fourth category, this is where you are at.

You know one of the greatest amazing studies in the Bible is the study of the 12 apostles. I know that they are Old Testament and I know that they deal with the nation of Israel and the Gospel they preach. There is no relevance to the Gospel that I preach, but in studying them you find the three types of Christians. He said some bore fruit 30-fold, some 60-fold, some 100-fold. Now you take those 12 apostles, they were common ordinary people just like you and me. They were called with a calling just like you and I are. Yet you find within that 12 that not everybody had the same relationship with God nor did everybody seem to have the same impact of ministry.

Within the 12 you had three who stand out above the rest. That leaves nine over here that are different. Out of the 12 originally you had one was a phony. That tells me that not every group of Christians you get even today, not every group of Christians you get. Why the Lord had 12 men and one of them was a phony. He was never saved. His name was Judas. That tells me that looking at the body of Christianity not everybody that says they are saved is. I am not here to judge who you are or you are not, but I am just telling you that is what the book says. The Lord picked 12 and one of them was a phony. Those 12 represent what New Testament Christianity Christians and their fruit bearing should be. One of them was a phony. I do not believe for a moment, though I would like to believe it, that everybody here this morning that says they are a Christian is a Christian. I am not looking down in your world and saying you are or you are not. I am just telling you what the book says.

So out of the 11 that are left you have three. You know who they are: Peter, James, and John. Peter, James, and John do more, see more or part of more than the other 12. I mean at the raising of Jairus' daughter it was not all the 12, it was Peter, James, and John. At the Mount of Transfiguration when he stepped beyond the cross it was glorified. It was not all the 12, it was Peter, James, and John. Peter, James, and John see things and experience things in a greater way than the rest of the 12. It is not just true of Christians. There are some of you in here that are plugged into ministry that you experience more, God does more with you than He does with other people in His church. You know why? Because you put in more, and Peter, James, and John are three great character studies in the Bible. After you get past, after you get past or you get into the book of Acts, you only hear about Peter and John. James gets killed, but you see how that thing weighs itself out. Peter, James, and John were the inner three. So you have the 12, there is the 30 percent, then you have the three, there is the 60 percent, then you had one who went all the way. His name was John.

When all the other 12 are scattered when Christ is being crucified, you know where John is? He is at the feet of Jesus. He is down there at the feet. Do you ever notice that John, when Christ on the cross looked down and saw John that He gave John to care for His mother? There is a reason for that. You realize it is John who writes the greatest book in the Bible that lays out the deity of Christ, Christ's first coming, and then writes the greatest book in the Bible on Christ's second coming. You realize it is the same John? You realize that John in the Bible is the only man that Jesus says He loved? I mean Jesus loved them all and Jesus loves all of you. But John is the only man in the Bible that Jesus verbally says He loved. Somebody said, "You think that John had a special, Jesus had a special love for John?" Really He did. You know why? And God has got a special love for you over maybe the person sitting next to you. You know why? Because you have got a special love for Him. God loves all of you. But let us be honest. Some of you could not care less about Him this morning. Some of you lived your whole life this week and never even talked to Him. Some of you lived your whole life this week and never even gotten a book. You are going to sit here and say, "Well, He loves you more than me." You bet He does. You bet He does. You say, "Well, I do not like that." He does not like the fact that you do not care about Him. He did not like the fact that you will sit down at lunch today and you will not even thank Him for what He has given you. But I guarantee you, you start choking on your food and there is no paramedic around and you are about ready to die. The first thing out of your mouth will be, oh, well, it will not be very clear, but it will be, it will be, "Oh God." There is your egg, shoots in somebody's face across the table.

So you have got the 12 apostles, there is the 30. In that you have Peter, James, and John, there is the 60. Then you have John. John goes the distance. It is John who does something that no other man can do and no other man in the Bible has done. There have been some great men in the Bible, but at the Last Supper, John leans over and lays his head on the breast of Jesus. You know what? If you understand who Jesus was and what Jesus was, you know He was the incarnate Son of God. John leans over and puts his head on the breast of Jesus and he hears the heartbeat of God. You know what you ought to be? You know what separates you from the hundredfold, from the 30 and the 60? It is that same thing. Most of you here this morning, and I love you to death, but you will go through your whole life and you will never hear the heartbeat of God. When you

hear the heartbeat of God, your life is changed. When you hear the heartbeat of God, your life is never going to be the same again. When you hear the heartbeat of God, this whole world passes away and everything with it. Nothing on this planet will ever run competition with that book again because you did what nobody else has been able to do. You laid your head on the breast of Jesus through that book and you heard God's very heartbeat. I could tell you right now tonight what book in that Bible is God's heartbeat. What good would it do? What good would it do?

In the fourth one we find three classes of Christians, fruit bearers, the 30-fold, the 60-fold, and the 100-fold. Now I know how human nature goes, and I know how it is right now. Some of you sad sack Christians that are not worth powder blowing your hair. You are sitting there and saying, "I will be dissatisfied to be a 30." I know what you are saying. I have said it myself. I have had people tell me after I preached the Judgment Seat of Christ about being naked, they actually have the audacity to ask me, I am the wrong person to ask, "What do I got to do just to get a pair of underwear?" And actually say, "Well, as long as I have a little bit of clothing, I will be satisfied." You are a fool. You are an absolute idiot. In the Boaz scheme of things, I do not even have a name for you I can say publicly. You are crazy. Some of you are sitting there, "Well, I will be satisfied just to be a 60." Really? Look at my eyes. Look at my face. After what He did for you, after what the price that He paid, after what He did for you and for me, you are willing to be satisfied with being a 30 or a 60. Come on. Are you really willing in your mind? Or have you lost your mind? You think that is going to play out at the Judgment Seat of Christ when you actually see what He did for you and the price that was paid? You think that that is going to cut it? You are a fool. I love you, but you are a fool. But I know some of you are thinking that way. Because I used to think that way.

In the Bible, the palm tree is always likened to Christians. Psalms 1 says, "you and I should be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters." Trees in the Bible are like people. One time Jesus healed a guy that was blind and Jesus said, "What do you see?" And he said, "I see men walking around like trees." Trees have families, so you study your family tree. Trees have limbs. The cells in a tree change every seven years. The cells in your body completely change every seven years. You can cut a tree in half and you can tell how old it is by the layers. You cut you in half and you just bleed a lot. You cannot really do that one. Might be something to it, though.

*Psalms 92:12*

*The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*

You know, in the Middle East, there is a particular type of palm tree. Very scarce. Used to be very plentiful. In the time of Jesus, they were everywhere. Time of David, they were everywhere. When the Psalmist wrote that in Psalms 92, and it all ties together. The real name for it, if I can do this right, is, the Latin name for it is Phoenix dactylifera. That is the name of the palm tree in the classical. The Koine is called a date palm. Not because when you took a girl on a date, you took her under this particular tree. The fruit were dates. I just want to clear that up because I saw some of your eyes light up looking for that tree. It does not simply mean if you find one and get under it, that you will have a date that night, too. I want you to know that. But it is simply called a date palm.

I have told you many, many times how that everything in the Bible was an incredible picture. It is incredible. The characteristic between these palm trees and Christians and you and me because the Bible says that the righteous, that is you and me. We ought to flourish like a palm tree. You ought to bear fruit. I remember years, and this has probably been 30 some years ago, I was coming through Matthew and saw this and I did a little study on the 30 and the 60 and the 100. He even put a message together on it, and I saw those three types of Christians and I ran into this. These trees are very rare today in the Middle East, much like soul winning Bible believing Christians. There was a time when they were very plentiful, and it was a time in the Philadelphia church age when Bible believing Christians were very plentiful. But now the palm trees are very rare and very scarce to find. So are God's people who really understand the Bible.

It is said that the tree had over 360 uses. The incredible thing about this tree is the fact that you could take it and you could make just about everything you needed. You could make rope from it. You could use the lumber for shelter. It was good for food. There were 360 things, and I got them listed someplace, of all the things that they could do with this tree. The amazing thing about it, I thought, is this tree exists in the desert, the wilderness where there is no water, visible water. The reason for that is that its roots go down sometimes to 100 and 200 feet, and it finds the hidden water that is underneath the rocks that is deep in the desert. So it can survive the hottest desert. I thought to myself that is exactly what that would get you and me through. Rooted in the Word of God that your roots go down so deep that you can survive any desert, any holocaust, anything that comes in your life simply because your roots are down so deep that you are never without the water or the Word of God. Incredible, incredible.

I read that when it produces dates, the fruit, that the best dates, and it really does not produce good eating fruit in that tree until that tree is at least 30 years in the ground. Yet I find in the Bible that the real worth of a man all the way through the Bible starts when he is 30. He started his public ministry when he was 30, crucified when he was 33. I look at everything that you young men doing now will come to fruition in a real way, and you probably won't see it, I will see it when you hit that age 30 if you are doing what is right, it all kind of goes together. That is just a standard principle in the Bible.

But just like Matthew, Mark, Luke, these trees grow in three lengths. There is one species that grows to 30 feet. There is another species that grows to 60 feet. There is a final species that grows to 100 feet. "He hath ears to hear, let him hear." You see, the palm tree is a great example because it shows you the three levels of Christians, but I want to say this to you, 30 feet, 60 feet, and 100 feet. It does not do us any good to grow tall if you do not grow straight. That is the key. It does not matter how tall you are if you are not straight in your growth.

Today we get an invaluable piece of the puzzle. We learn more principles. If you do not just get them, you have to learn how to apply them and make them work for you. In the process of this, there will be two groups of people come out of here. There will be people who will grab it and see it and do something with it, and maybe God will take you and put you into that. There will be some that you are already set in where you are at. There are some of you that when I started this morning, your eyes were closed so fast that you thought I was boring you to death. That stuff just went in and bounced right off you like BBs off a brick wall. There are some of you that you will

go out of here and you will get excited about it and you will just do everything that you think you are supposed to do. In six months from now or three months from now, it will be all gone for you. There will be some of you here today that because you have got a good and honest heart, that you will prepare that heart and God will do something with it. But no matter what, this is what you have got to learn. This is the inside looking out on why things are the way they are.

## X. Invitation and Prayer

Every head bowed and every eye closed. Let me ask you a question this morning. You have heard a good message that I guarantee you everybody in this room knows where you are at today. Everybody in this room on self-examination through the Holy Spirit of God taps you on the shoulder and lets you know exactly where you are at. The Gospel received. Will you receive the Gospel today? It is not about being baptized. It is not about joining the church. It is not about any of those things. It is simply about will you receive the Gospel today, the good news, and then will you do something with it in your life?

Now every head bowed and every eye closed and no one is looking around, and I am just going to ask you very quickly and then I am going to move on here and we will be done this morning. You want to remember that Sandy wants to meet with her ladies down here so you will do that in just a minute, but let me just ask you. Have you received the Gospel today? Now before you answer yes, let me define that for you. Do you know today, right now, right now if you died today that you would go to Heaven?

Now I know we have got today's kids Sunday and we have got all the little kids in here, and kids if you struggle with that you need to take that to your mom and your dad. If your mom and dad need help then bring them to me and I will help you with that. But I am not talking to you this morning. I am but I am not. If you have struggled with that, that needs to be with you and your mom and dad and I will help you how I can. But I am talking to the adults here now. Do you know today if you died right now you would go to Heaven? That is the Gospel received. It is not about, yeah, I have been to church all my life or it is about, yeah, I got a Bible or, yeah, I read my Bible. That is not it. You have all those things, yet you still do not know if you die right now and drop over in that chair that you would go to Heaven, that you do not have anything. My question I am asking is this. Do you know if you died right now you would go to Heaven? If you do not, would you let me pray for you? I will not embarrass you. Everybody's head is bowed. I am the only one looking around. But I am going to pray in just a moment. After a message like this, and I know the Holy Spirit of God had to be cranking on you today. He was cranking on me. Would you be honest enough? Would you have that honest and good heart today to raise that hand and say, "Bob, pray for me? I am not sure I am going to die right now. I go to Heaven." Thank you in the back. Thank you, son. Thank you, sir. I see it. Let me put it back down. Thank you, buddy. Anybody else? Thank you. Thank you, buddy. Anybody else? This is the time to make sure. Anybody else? Let me see it. Put it up real high. Anybody else? God bless you. I see it back there. Thank you, buddy. Anybody else? Anybody else? Two young men raised their hands and one little child whose mom and dad will work with that one. But anybody else? We are going to wait just a moment. I am not sure. You need to make sure. I am not talking about just making

sure so you can get out of the problem that you are in right now. I am talking about making sure so you can change your life. I am talking about that you make that decision and change that decision and then your whole life turns around from there. Anybody else? Anybody else? Two men before I pray.

Now Father, we do thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. I thank you for your Word today. Lord, I love you so much and I love these people. Lord, I am so excited about, and I do not even know who it is going to be yet. I purposely not ask. I have stayed away. I just want, I want you to surprise me come the end of this year. I want you to surprise me with the men and women who have doing the work. I am not asking anybody who is or who is not. Some people are coming to me and I am helping them. But Lord, I have no agenda. I have no list that I want. I just want you to bring me because I know that you will bring me exactly who I need to have. I am excited about that. But Lord, I pray for the two men that raised their hand today and for the little guy. The mom and dad will be in tune to that, or if I need the help of that, I would be glad to. But for the two men that raised their hand. Lord, do not let them walk out of here without Christ. I know they both come from different lifestyles and they both have different set of problems, but the answer is the same, and that answer is Jesus Christ. Lord, I pray that as we pray today that you will touch their heart, that they will know that they need to do what needs to be done. Lord, that will give you the honor and the glory today. We love you, Father. We pray all these things in your holy name. Every head bowed, every eye closed.

Okay guys, as simply as this. I got some guys in the back and some guys up here that will take you into one of my offices and open up the Word of God and show you how to be saved. Show you how to receive the Gospel. But it is a life changing event. It is something that you are going to, in your heart you are going to repent and you are going to turn from the world and you are going to give your life to God. That means the old friends go, the old things go and everything becomes new. That has to be your choice. But it is the best choice you will ever make.

Now here is the deal. Every head bowed, eye closed. We have already prayed. If you are honest today and you have an honest and good heart and you want to know for sure, here is what I want you to do. Just stand up wherever you are at. I will come and get you and send you in my back. If you are in the back, son, just stand up and I will have the guy sitting next to you take it there and show you if you want to do that. You want to stand up, want to do it? You want to know for sure? Today is the day. How about it, pal? You want to do it? You want to know for sure up front? Just stand up where you are at. Let us take the open Bible and you can know for sure you are saved. Anybody? Anybody at all? This is where it comes down to. This is what we have talked about. This is the Gospel received. Will you do it? Anybody? Just going to wait for a moment. Will you do it? God bless you. God bless you. Woody? Woody? Take him right there. Barb? A curb? Anybody else? Anybody else? Anybody else? We are going to wait. We are going to wait for you. We are going to wait for you. I am not sure. Make sure today. Make sure today. One more time across. Over here to my right. Anybody? Right center. Anybody? Coming across the middle. Over to my left. Anybody? I want to know for sure. You raise your hand. Now is your time. While we are praying for you.

Father, we do thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus and thank you for these that stepped out this morning to trust Christ. I pray, Father, that as they are opening up the Scriptures right now that you will give them the wisdom, the word, and everything that they need. Thank you for the young man that came out to play ball and Lord wanted to today know more about Christ and be saved. I thank you for that. I pray his life will be changed and he will turn it around. Pray for the dear lady that stood up, Lord, that with all the things that she is going through that she will make it sure in her life and give her what she needs. Lord, help us to always to love people and to bring them to the Word of God and help me to always help them no matter where they are at. Thank you for today for this great example of four case studies. Now, Lord, it is not about just receiving the Gospel. Help us to fulfill the Gospel in all that we do. Lord, we will be thankful and pray and give it all to you in your honor and glory. In Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen. God bless you this morning. Help yourself to the bookstore back there. Take my buddy back there, please, and make sure he gets what he wants. And all the ladies.