

## I. The Importance of Righteous Judgment

Last week, we looked at John 7:24 and studied the aspect of how to make good, solid choices. We call them judgment calls in our Christian lives.

*John 7:24*

*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*

Life most certainly is about the choices that we make. There is no question about that. You do not have to live very many years to realize it can just take one or two bad choices that alter the course of your life forever. A lot of those bad choices go back to not making good judgment calls on what we allow in our life. This is the aspect of not believing everything you hear or even see, but using the principles of the Word of God to separate the real from the phony.

Most of God's people fail in being able to do this. This is why they make bad choices and bad decisions. This is why they look at something or somebody and do not make the judgment on what that person is doing in their life right, and then they allow it into their own life. The end result is not very good.

I showed you the two undeniable keys to see what is the real deal versus what is phony.

1. Sound doctrine. Does the person's life line up with the principles of the Word of God in its entirety?
2. You look at the fruit of God in their lives.

These two things are indispensable because they cannot be faked. You cannot fake truth, and you cannot fake fruit. You can fake Christianity and give the appearance, but if you listen to what they say and watch what they do, in many cases, or most cases, or in all cases for that matter, there will not be any fruit. Then you can very clearly make that judgment whether you want to allow that in your life or not, or in the life of your family.

## II. Defining Biblical Fruit

To better understand when I talk about fruit, I want to go through and explain this today. When I talk about the fruit in our lives, real biblical fruit will only come from the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is found in Galatians.

*Galatians 5:22-23*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

The fruit of God in your life and my life, when we talk about it, will come only from the relationship we have with Christ and the intimacy that we have with Him. When a husband and

wife get married and they start to have a family, that baby or that child will come through the two entering into the intimacy that produces a child. There are parents that have tried to have kids for two or three years and cannot have them, and then suddenly one day, the baby is going to be here. Praise the Lord for that.

My point is this: you do not always bear fruit. It is through the ongoing intimate relationship that you have with Christ that you will bear fruit, and that fruit will be evident. The fruit of God, the Holy Spirit of God, will only come through us walking in the Spirit and having that intimate relationship with Him. One of the greatest things that you want to look for in a person's life is whether the fruit is there or not. If they do not have the fruit, then all you are going to have, and this is what the verse is saying, is the appearance. You cannot fake fruit. Fruit has to be the real deal, as sound doctrine is.

When I talk about fruit, I am talking about three aspects of your life. When you talk like this, you will find people who maybe have not won anybody to Christ yet. So when I talk like this, you get defeated over it and think, "Well, there must be something wrong with me because I have not won anybody to Christ yet." Or you find people who just got saved and really want to win people to Christ, but you are in that early stage. Let me tell you what fruit really is.

Fruit will be, first of all, for all of you young parents and moms and dads, the first guaranteed fruit you have to produce is your family. That is a given. If you fail in that one, then the rest of it is to no avail. I have known many preachers and many Christians whose families were a disaster, but they are out there pushing soul winning and populating Christianity everywhere when their own kids will not follow them. The real fruit has to start with you and your family. That is where you learn the basic technique of fruit bearing.

The second aspect will be the people that you win to Christ. I want to say that and clarify that. It is not just that person, Billy Bob, winning Jimmy Joe to Christ, not here anyhow. If you are here this morning and you have been coming to church and you are unsaved, or maybe like Dalton, you just got saved, I have to confess to you, Dalton, you were set up. You had no choice, no chance. There have been people praying for you ever since you walked in that door. There were people that were loving you. I know some of them really wanted to be your friend because they found out you won a lottery and they wanted to borrow some money from you. But people became your friend and loved you because you are a very lovable guy.

We know when God brings us somebody, it is our responsibility to give them the best presentation of what a Christian is that can be. In your case, it worked. It worked in you two guys' case. When you went into that gun shop, you were not looking to get saved, but you were looking for something that was real, and God gave it to you. You guys did not have much of a chance either because we have been praying for you ever since we found out about you. All you people who got saved in our church, I am sorry, you were set up. You were set up by a bunch of God's people who love you enough that want to see you in heaven for all of eternity. A bunch of people who have been praying for you, been talking about you in a good sense, talking about you, talking, "Oh, he is doing this," or "She is doing this," or "They are coming here," or "They

are coming there," or "Let us really get this around them." We do that because that is what Christianity is really all about.

### III. The Church's Collective Fruit Bearing

First of all, we want you to see how real we really are. We are a family here. As a family, we always want more people to come into the family. It is a thing where when God brings us somebody, we know what we ought to do. We love them. We care for them. We pray for them. We put all the things in their life that we can to help point them to Christ. Then we automatically let the Holy Spirit of God do the work in your life.

This is real fruit bearing. It is the Holy Spirit of God coming down and working through a church, everybody in it, not just one or two people. He may use somebody to win this person to Christ, but it is everybody involved. When these boys got saved, or the girls have gotten saved, or this person got saved in the last year, everybody in this church bore that fruit. It was not just the person that won them to Christ. It was everybody that prayed for them. It was everybody that shook their hand and was nice to them. It was everybody who went out of their way to make them feel comfortable here because that is what Christians do. That is what the Holy Spirit of God does. You do that because you are walking in the Spirit yourself. You are in the Word of God. You are aware and in tune to people who need Christ.

So what does God do? God reaches down through this church, through you. It may be this person sits down and wins them to Christ and opens the Bible and shows them how to get saved. Praise the Lord for that. Somebody has got to do it. But it is everybody who was involved who bore that fruit. At the judgment seat of Christ, it is our fruit as a church, your fruit, because you were part of it. I am not even going to say you were indirectly part of it. That would be the wrong thing to say. You were directly involved in it because it was the Holy Spirit of God working through you. Maybe something you said, maybe one little thing you did, maybe one little thing out of the ordinary that you took the time to say or to do that without anybody ever knowing it was the turning point in that person's life. That is how God does it. That is how He does it here anyhow.

So you see that it starts with your family, and then it works with the fact that the people that you win to Christ. Then it goes into the third module, which is once they get saved, now we have the job of being not only a soul winner. We bore the fruit of that person finding Christ. But now we have to take the responsibility of pruning that young tree so that it bears fruit. That makes us all not only soul winners, but husbandmen.

Back in Genesis, you will find that when God put Adam and Eve in the garden, God put Adam down there to dress the garden and to keep it, all the trees and all the fruit. He was a husbandman. A husbandman takes care of the trees to make sure they bear the right fruit. So now you are going to be disciples. Now somebody is going to sit down and teach you the Bible, teach you the basic fundamentals of the Bible. They will take you through the discipleship too. That is our responsibility, not as soul winners, but also as husbandmen, to make sure that the fruit that God gives us.

The Bible says back there in Proverbs:

*Proverbs 27:23*

*Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.*

That means that you take care of what God gives you. It has been rule number one of my life and my ministry that I always want to take care of what and who God gives me. I never want to forget the people who have been there for me when I needed them, because it is an acceleration for me to be there when somebody else needs. Our church is filled with that. Somebody has a need, we are on board. I look at Jordan coming all the way over from Indiana. He is a tree. He is saved. He is a tree. God is going to transplant him here. Now it is our responsibility to pick him up, give him what he needs, help prune him, and make sure that he bears fruit.

We have done this for years and years and years. You know as well as I do, not all the trees take root. It is just the way of life. Not all the trees make it, not all of them bear fruit. The Bible makes it very clear in Matthew that there are some trees when they do not bear fruit, you have got to cut them down. That happens. It is just the way it is. You never focus on the trees that do not make it. You want to give your full attention to the trees that God has given you that as our responsibility be their husbandman.

So bearing fruit is not just winning somebody to Christ. Bearing fruit is not just about, "Oh, I just won so and so to Christ." Praise the Lord. That is bearing fruit. But it is all of our jobs. We do it together. You may not be the one that actually opened the Bible, but you are the one that prayed. You were the one that encouraged. You are the one that shook their hand. You are the one that made them feel comfortable that the Holy Spirit of God had a freeway into their life. That is what New Testament Christianity is. That is what a New Testament church is.

## IV. The Danger of Appearance Without Fruit

When you do not see those three areas, then the Bible tells us:

*1 Thessalonians 5:22*

*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

Because what you have without those three is an appearance. I am sad to say today, and I do not say it with any joy in my heart, but that is where most churches are actually at. They are just an appearance. They have got the building. They have got the pews. They have got this. It is like that little deal: "Here is the church. There is the steeple. Open the door, and there is all the people." That is all you have. It is not real. It is the appearance. Real fundamental biblical doctrine will produce fruit.

I told you that the Christian life will be about the judgment calls, the decisions, what and who we allow in our lives and what we do not. I showed you last week:

*1 Corinthians 2:15*

*But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.*

We never judge people. That is not our job. A lot of people do, but that is not our job. We judge things. We judge whether I am going to allow that. I may like the person, but I am not going to allow what they are doing to taint what I have with the Lord. Those are the judgment calls that we have to make. I would not hang out with anybody that is a gossip or a slanderer or anybody who sows discord because I may like the person, but I judge what they are doing is totally unbiblical, and I want nothing to do with it, and I do not want to be associated with it.

Last week, I gave you two places that illustrate this great doctrine on God not judging a man, but rather judging his works. The first one is in 1 Corinthians 3, that is the judgment of saved people. The second one was the Great White Throne in Revelation 20.

## V. Judging Works: Singular vs. Plural

I did not say this; in fact, somebody pointed this out to me this week that is more spiritual than I am, and I missed it until I saw it. Did you ever notice anything about those two passages dealing with a man's works? We know Revelation 20 will talk about an unsaved man, and it says that God will judge his works, plural.

*2 Corinthians 11:15*

*Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

That is an unsaved man. An unsaved man's life is filled with the works of sin, and at the Great White Throne, God will lay all of those works out and judge him by them, the works of unrighteousness that produce the works of the flesh and the fruits of unrighteousness. So that one is good.

But did you notice in 1 Corinthians 3, the trained eye, it does not say works. It says work, singular. Do you know why? Because at the judgment seat of Christ, that is the work of God that He began in you.

*Philippians 1:6*

*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*

At the judgment seat of Christ, He judges your work that He started in you the day you got saved. That is the work that gets judged in us at the judgment seat. Not you, not your sins. When you got saved, He began a good work in you. What did you do with that work? An unsaved man, it is the works of his unrighteousness. For you and me, it is the one single word "work" that He began in us the day we got saved. Wow, the difference between two little words, one being singular, one being plural, "work" versus "works." The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 3 that at the judgment seat of Christ, He takes that work and He sorts it out.

Along with that, in case you did not catch this, in Galatians 5:22-23, you will know that He lists nine fruits of the Spirit, but when He talks about the fruit of the Spirit, it is singular, just like the work. In other words, everything that God brings through your life and my life starts with your

relationship with the Holy Spirit of God. That is the fruit of God. So you want to take that home with you today. You want to look at that and remember that at the judgment seat of Christ, it is not about the right things or the wrong things that we have done. It is about the day you got saved, He began a work in your life. What have you done with that work?

That is why this church has a responsibility to these young men and young ladies that have moved here, who have come in here and have gotten saved. They want to be part of this because they believe that this is where God wants them to be. We have a responsibility to take the work that God began in us and cultivate the work that God has begun in them. That is New Testament Christianity.

Last week in Proverbs 3, we talked about putting your confidence in the Lord. Let me ask you this in light of putting our confidence in the Lord. I told you last week that in the days and the times that we live in, we need to have our confidence in the Lord. But let me ask you this: compared to 1 Corinthians 3 and the work God began in you, how confident is God in you and me that that work is going to get done? We as God's people are always afraid we cannot trust God. That is the most ridiculous thing you could ever say. "Well, I do not know if I can really trust God." That is not the issue. The real problem is, can God trust you? That is the problem. But we get it all backward.

So we learn, do not look or listen to anybody who has no fruit bearing process. I gave you the two great contrasts of that: the Lord Jesus Christ and the leaders of the nation of Israel, the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees. Christ had the doctrine. He had the power of God. He certainly had the fruit of God. They had absolutely nothing.

*Matthew 7:16*

*Ye shall know them by their fruits.*

One of the greatest truths in judging what we will allow in our lives or not allow in our lives and from whom will be no barren fig trees allowed. We ought to get T-shirts with that put on it and sell them in the bookstore: "No barren fig trees allowed."

When it comes to judging people, the only person we really should be judging is ourselves. A model for that will be found in 2 Corinthians:

*2 Corinthians 13:5*

*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

If God's people would spend all the time judging themselves first, you would not have time to judge anybody else. Your basket would be full. I would suggest that you smell your own basket of fruit. Put a gas mask on before you do it. I would say that you look at your own fruit before you tear into somebody else. Then you judge for yourself a righteous judgment as to what I am going to allow in my life and not allow in my life because I do not want to wind up as a barren fig tree.

Somebody one time treated me terribly and did some terrible things to me and said some terrible things to me. I responded to them in a very kind, gracious way and even helped them through some tough times that they were going through. They were amazed at that and they asked me at a later time, "After all the things I said to you and said about you and did to you, you had an opportunity to just throw me along the road and you did not. I just want to know why you did not do that." The answer was so quick and so simple. I wish I had slowed down a little bit and said it. I just simply said, "Do you know why? Because that would have made me just like you. I do not want to be like you. I want to be like Christ. I am far from what Christ wants me to be, but I do not want to be that way."

So you begin to see that you judge yourself first. Examine yourself. We need to do that on an hourly basis. We need to look at ourselves, examine our motive, examine what we say, examine our attitudes, examine everything about that. The second thing is, he says, you have got to prove yourself. Do not take face value of what somebody says about their own walk with God or how much time they spend in the Bible or how much they love God. They have to prove themselves. There is a process to do that found in the Bible.

I guess the greatest one of these is probably the worst unknown: know yourself. Know what you are capable of. Know what your limitations are. Know the fact that you can be a real problem. Know the fact that the best thing for you to do when you get into a crowd is to take a roll of duct tape and put it over your mouth. Realize that there are things about us that we need to really work on. God's people are famous for wanting to work on everybody else's problems. We need to work on our own.

How was that for an introduction? Pretty good, I would say.

## VI. The Root of Rejection: Envy and Lack of Credibility

Today, we are going to continue in John 7. We will tie it all together as we always do. The religious leaders are right back at Him again. They never quit, even today. We know that the leaders have caused a great division with the people over Christ's teaching and His ministry to them. In reality, this will be the great dividing of light versus darkness, truth versus error, fruit versus barrenness, the Spirit of God versus the spirit of the Antichrist or the spirit of the devil. All of it is over His authority and His doctrine and the fruit that His ministry is producing.

You remember last week that people with no fruit will always attack those who have fruit. That is just a standard operational procedure of human nature, just the way it is. As we glance down through John 7 here from verse 25 on, we see from last week in verses 25 and 27, there is a group that says, "He is the very Christ." In verses 28 and 29, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself tells them that He is of God, from God, and what He is doing is because of God. Then in verse 30, there is a group that wants to take Him and now kill Him. Then it says in verse 31, "Yet many believed." We have a real division here. In verse 32, they again want to take Him and kill Him. Then in verse 41, another group says, "No, no, no, He is the Christ." Then in verse 45, the other group comes back and says, "Why have you not taken Him yet and killed Him?" There is a division among the people over Him.

Christ will always divide. Truth divides. We are going to look at verses 47 through 53 today, and we are going to look at another great lesson behind His rejection. I want you to see this thing in its complete composite. Another reason for the fundamental bottom line rejection by the leaders of Israel.

*John 7:47-53*

*Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went unto his own house.*

Let us pray. Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. Thank You today for the folks that are here. We pray, Father, Your blessings upon all that we endeavor to do for You, and we just pray, Father, that You will help us today to put it all together and make this a very clear presentation of not only how they treated Christ, but what we can expect today, and yet help each one of us realize that bearing fruit is the job of this church, not just one person. Lord, we do not have a soul winning ministry because our church is a soul winning ministry. We just take the people that God brings us and we just do with them what God would have us to do, and it bears fruit, not because of me, but because of all of these folks here who love You and love that book and are walking in the Spirit of God. We thank You now and praise You. In Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

I read down here in John 7:52 where it says, "They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." That is typical of Bible scholars. They are telling Nicodemus, "Well, you need to search the scripture, son, and the Bible does not say anything about a prophet coming out of Galilee." That is Bible scholars for you because in 2 Kings 14:25, you have a prophet, Jonah, who comes from Galilee. Bible scholars do not get the Bible down very well. There is a clear case where they say something is not in the Bible, but it is right there in front of your face if you can claim to read it.

Notice like today, the educated class of the day belittles the little guy who simply believes what Christ says. They are saying in essence, "Look at us. You need to follow us. Have any of us, the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees, do you see any of us following Him? Has any of the Pharisees believed on Him? You guys are deceived. You really do not have the education we have. Why, Dr. Fine, Dr. Howard, Dr. Fine over here, they got PhDs. They are a member of the Sanhedrin. They have been to Bible colleges. They are doctors. They got all the great degrees. You guys are dumb hillbillies out of Raytown, Missouri. You do not have the benefit of our education. So you are so stupid you believe that this man shows up and claims to be the absolute perfect Word of God incarnate. Boy, are you dumb. You guys do not know the law. You do not know the Greek and the Hebrew. We do because we have studied it. I am counting right now, you got a curse on you because you are following this guy and really do not know what the Bible says. But you people who really do not know the Greek and the Hebrew, you will never figure it

out without us. You stupid people who believe that God could give us a book that is perfect without error, that is inspired without running it through us. Why, you have been deceived. Why, everybody knows God only works through the Greek and the Hebrew. Well, everybody knows that you cannot get to God without a college education in Bible. The Bible scholars who will really tell you what God meant to say when He screwed up His Bible and put mistakes in it, but it is depending on us with our education to straighten God's Word out." That is these guys.

Some things never change. They wanted to correct the Word of God at the first coming of Christ and say that you cannot follow Him. Now at the second coming of Christ, you have Him in the volume of a book. The Word was God, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. At the second coming of Christ, they are trying to tell you the same thing. Their thinking is, "Come on guys, how does God get along without my superior intellect? How do you get along without me telling you what the Bible says?" That is a clear indication where that comes from.

*Isaiah 14:14*

*I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.*

Now we begin to see what really drives this crowd. Today we are going to get to the bottom line of it. Now we begin to see what drives this crowd who have no doctrine, they have absolutely no authority and barren fruit. Now we see the real reason for their rejection and their hatred and their slander. If we would turn back to Mark 15 at the crucifixion, the real issue now comes to the surface. In Mark 15:10, when they are getting ready to crucify Him, He reveals what the underlying problem is where it says:

*Mark 15:10*

*For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.*

You see it again in Matthew:

*Matthew 27:18*

*For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.*

You see it after He is dead and resurrected and went back to heaven in Paul's Gospel in Acts 13:45 and Acts 17:5, their attitude toward Christianity, they envied Him.

Now learn what I am about to tell you. This is worth \$100 million in gold bullion. This is better than winning the lottery. This is better than anything you could ever have in life. This truth, His truth, has taken from them the one thing all false teachers, all false leaders, all heretics, all people who spend their life destroying the Word of God, slandering all evil men and women who so desperately need to keep up their appearance. This has described the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They are upset. They are mad because they want to get rid of Him, but He will not go away. They have devised all kinds of plans to get rid of Him, yet He is still here. Now we find out after the slander, the lying, calling Him of the devil, and all the things that He does, and denying the Holy Spirit of God by which He does these works, now we see what the real fundamental problem is. They envied Him.

Do you know why they envied Him? Because He had the one thing they do not have. They needed one thing to be able to keep up the appearance to the people. Do you know what it was? Now the people will not follow them because they now have been exposed of having no authority, no fruit, and now no credibility. That leaves them fake and phony, and they hate Him for exposing them by even showing up. Now they envy Him for what He has and what they do not. The root cause of slander will always be envy. You need to write this down and remember it. The root cause of slander will always be envy, and the root cause of envy will always be a barren fig tree. That is absolutely the most astounding thing you will ever get today.

## VII. Discerning Falsehood: The American Cults and Historical Truth

This is a lesson that I have learned years and years and years ago when dealing with the modern day heretics, the cults, or any person who will try to discredit the truth. This is how you have to deal with them. Maybe this will help you because I see this wrong so many times in so many ways. You have to find a way to deny them what they really want most, and that is credibility.

When I look in dealing with the cults, that will be like the Jehovah Witnesses, the Mormons, the Church of Christ, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Charismatics, that whole crowd. The first thing you have to realize is that these are called American cults. These are poor man's religions. If you want to really go to hell in class, become a Roman Catholic. If you want to go to hell in a golden Cadillac, get into the Catholic Church. You will slide in there with all the grandeur of the pomp and the circumstance. If you want to go to hell with a Volkswagen with the wheels off, get into one of these American cults.

I would say that if, and this is just me now, I need this for my message so this may not be true, I would say that a guy that goes to hell, if he is a Roman Catholic all of his life, he might be able to go to hell to hold a little bit of credibility for the fact that, "Well, I believed in an esteemed religion even though it was absolutely fake and it put me in hell." It was a grandiose thing that has been around for a long time. I think the most ridiculous, funniest thing on the planet is to slide into hell with a JW or a Mormon.

From just a worldly standpoint, and this is why most people do not know this, why are they called the American cults? I will tell you because in history, from the beginning of America in 1776, I have told you a couple weeks ago there were seven great awakenings across this country. Legitimate Holy Spirit of God revivals that He sent from the East Coast to the West Coast. The reason why He did that is because the devil was popping up these American cults to counter the great American revivals. So we look at these today, and God's people are, I love them to death, but they are always not the smartest people on the planet.

When you look at these American cults that I have given you, none of them start before 1800. If you are a Jehovah Witness, if you are a Mormon, if you are a Church of Christ, if you are a Seventh Day Adventist, or whatever, Charismatic, you are nowhere in history for 1900 years. There is not one person on Earth, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, or Pluto, who ever believed one stick of what you claim is the truth of God today. You did not show up until after 1800. Maybe

1820, 1840, 1850. My goodness, the Charismatic movement did not show up until 1900. But as time passes, people who do not know anything about the Bible, they forget those things, and now these organizations pop up and they want you to believe they are legitimate. Most of God's people make the fatal mistake when you try to deal with them. None of these existed before 1800.

So when you deal with them, they will always try to go one on one with you with the Bible. They will always try to debate you. You see the Jehovah Witnesses, they have a plan to what they do. I can spot them three blocks away. The Mormons always ride bicycles. They wear the little white tags. Jehovah Witnesses, they walk. I see them, they work my neighborhood. They mark your house once they do not get anywhere so they do not waste their time.

It was several, I do not know, 10, 12 years ago, maybe longer than that, that I was out there on a Saturday morning and I saw these two guys walking down the street here, and I immediately saw they were Jehovah Witnesses. They came up to my, I waited for them, they came up to my front porch and they said, and before they could say anything, I said, "Hey, you guys must be Jehovah Witnesses." The little guy looked at the big guy and says, "Yeah, how did you know that?" I said, "Well, I am a Jehovah Witness." He says, "You are?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, we know all of our brethren in this area, we did not know anything about you." He says, "When were you a Jehovah Witness?" I said, "About 25 years ago when I asked Jesus Christ, the Jehovah God, to come into my heart and save me from a literal burning hell."

*Acts 1:8*

*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

I said, "So I am a Jehovah Witness." The little guy looked at the big guy and he says, "That is not the kind we are." I said, "That is the only kind there is. You guys must be phonies." Then I proceeded to deal with not giving them any credibility. Because when you sit down and open the Bible with them, that is what they want. Here is their thinking: if you are stupid enough to open up a Bible and debate them, then your thinking must be that they are credible, worthy of debate. So what you do, they give you their verses, you give you yours, you accomplish nothing. They go away now thinking they are credible because here is a Christian who actually debated them on the Bible so they must have some kind of credibility. That is the wrong thing to do. You do not go there with them. You beat them to death with the fact that you were nowhere in history before 1830 if you are a JW.

I will say, "You believe you are the truth, you believe you are the only true church." They are all the same. You can do this with any of them. They will say, "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes." I will say, "You believe there is no salvation outside of your church, right? Because I am a Baptist so I am dying to go into hell, right?" You have to have that, not hell, I am dying to go into destruction. "That is right." I said, "Let me ask you a question. I will become a Jehovah Witness in 30 seconds. We will all go down there at the Kingdom Hall and you can baptize me or whatever you do. Just answer one question." "What is that?" "Where were you in 1750? Give me one JW

pastor. Just give me one. I will tell you what I will do. I will give you, for every one guy you give me, I will give you 50 who believe what I believe. I will give you Savonarola. I will give you John Rawlings. I will give you Martin Luther." I could go on for all day long. "Just give me one." I said, "I will do it better than that. Give me one, you claim you are the only true church. Give me one Jehovah Witness in 1400 that believes what you believe. I will tell you what I will do. I will give you a million dollars. Just give me one person and prove it in history." The guy said, "Well, you do not even have a million dollars." I said, "I will get it together before you find a guy." They are not there. They are nowhere.

What they desperately want from you and from me is credibility because they have none. That is the problem with the scribes. They envied what He had because they did not have it. These American cults, every one of them, they have no credibility. They go back nowhere before the 1800s, and they desperately want to be proven that they are the real deal. Stupid Baptists do it by arguing with them, getting into a debate with them when all you need to do is just simply say, "You know what? You are a phony because you are nowhere in history," and just stay on that point. Do you know what it will do? It is like catching fishing and catching a 500-pound marlin. He will be all over the place. He will try to take you here, try to take you there. "Well, what about this? Well, what about that?" And you just keep coming back, "What about where were you? You got 19 centuries. Use them. Well, what about this? Where were you in the second century? Just give me one. Well, what about that? Where were you in the third century? Well, what about that? Where were you in the fourth century? You got 19 of them. Use them." You beat them to death. Do you know why? They have no credibility. The thing you never want to do is give them that credibility.

That is what drove the scribes and the Pharisees up the wall with Jesus. He would never give them the credibility. You notice He never got in a doctrinal argument with them? He never did. He may have quoted something to them, but He never said, "Okay, boys, let us just sit down and find out." When they said there was no prophet in Galilee, He did not say, "Oh, I told you there was." He did not. Do you know why? He is not giving them any credibility. Only stupid Baptists give them credibility. You simply camp on the fact that they have no authority or legitimacy or credibility. This is why heretics will always want to debate you, to prove their point and gain some kind of credibility.

## VIII. The Importance of Historical Truth and Credibility

The Bible scholars now, they do the same thing, but they do it in reverse. They are like our boys here in John 7. They will slander and discredit you for believing that you have a Bible that is absolute that you can trust that does not take them to correct it to tell you what the Bible really means.

I am going to tell you something. You see this in history, if you are any kind of observer of history, you see this tremendous pressure around 1900 with the good fundamental guys who write good stuff. But they bend to the pressure of what is happening because around 1900 is when scholasticism and higher education began to take over the Bible from the common man.

We have in our bookstore back there a book by the guy named Clarence Larkin. Clarence Larkin wrote a number of good books. \*The Spirit Rules\* is a good one. \*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth\* is a good one. The one we make reference to all the time is \*Dispensational Truth\*, which I will be honest to tell you, it is one of the best books you will get your hands on for understanding a lot of things about the Bible. But I am going to tell you this, if you buy \*Dispensational Truth\*, and it is a big book back there, the first couple chapters, get your X-Acto cutter and cut them out. He goes through the stupidest stuff on the creation about the canopy theory, about the clouds surrounding the earth, about the water vapor and the canopy of the cloud. Where does he get that? The Bible in Genesis 1, 2, and 3. Do you know where he got that? He was growing up in a time where he wanted to be recognized as a Bible scholar. He wanted to be recognized as an intellect like they all did. He knew there was a lot of pressure, a lot of criticism, and he could get away with all the other stuff in the Bible, but he knew if he put about the creation of the world in Genesis 1:1, 1:2, 1:3 and all down through there, if he laid that out that that was a firefight between God and the devil, and the devil getting kicked out of heaven, he could never be recognized as a scholar.

Do you know what he did? He came up with the most ridiculously, scientifically plausible event that the scientific educated world could have said, "Hmm, yeah, that is pretty good." If he had just said, "Do you know what it is, Genesis 1, 2, and 3 is, God and the devil got into a fistfight up there and they set a galactic war going on to make Star Wars look like a bunch of little kids shooting marbles, and God kicked the devil out and now they just cast this whole thing into chaos." You cannot. That is not a scholar. I will never be a scholar. I will never have a doctor degree. Giving me a doctor degree is like putting whipped cream on an onion. But I will always be a Bible believer, because I do not need that stuff. I know where the fruit really is. I know where the credibility is.

Back in my day, this would be 1970 to 1990, if you believed the King James Bible, 1611 was the absolute perfect word of God, they made fun of you. Back in my day in those times, Peter S. Ruckman, which we all know, we have many of his books in there, he was the champion of the King James Bible and he was, most of the guys who believed the book today would either directly or indirectly run it back to him. Back in my day, all the guys that were educated when they looked at me, or guys like me, and we believed the King James Bibles were the Word of God against education, do you know what they called us? Ruckmanites. "Oh, you are just a Ruckmanite."

Now back in 1930s to 1940s, J. Frank Norris split from the Southern Baptist Convention and really tore the whole country apart and started what we know as fundamentalism and led a whole bunch of people out of the Southern Baptist Church and Convention that actually believed the Bible was the Word of God like you and I do. They called his followers, Norrissites. Back around the 1900s, 1880 to 1900, somewhere in there, there was a guy whose name was John Nelson Darby. John Nelson Darby is called the father of dispensationalism. He was a writer back there that took the Bible and put it in its proper divisions of dispensations against the rest of the world that was against dispensationalism. If we have dispensational truth, it is because of him. We have

the 11 or 12 dispensations through our Bible that I have taught you because of him. Back then his followers were called Darbyites.

In the Dark Ages, you had a group of people who the Roman Catholic Church were saying, "You need to follow us. Peter was the first pope. You need to follow Matthew and Peter and all that stuff." And a group said, "No, we are not following that. We believe that the apostle Paul was the apostle to the church and we are going to follow his teachings instead of your teachings." They were called Paulicians. See how it works? Back around 180 AD, you had a guy by the name of Montanus, and things were starting to fall apart back then, and even then people were saying, "Well, you have got to be baptized to go to heaven and all this stuff." Montanus said, "No, no, no, we are sticking with a book. We believe that you get saved through the blood of Christ," and he broke away from that crowd, and the people that followed him were called Montanists. Back around 200 to 300, you had a guy by the name of Novatian. They were starting back then to teach the fact of amillennialism, that Christ really was not coming back, and he says, "We are staying with a book. We are going to believe in the literal return of the Lord Jesus Christ," and all his followers, Novatians. Then you had a guy around 200 to 300, his name was Nestorius. They started to say, "Well, the Lord's Supper is the way you get saved. It is a sacrament and you need to take the Lord's Supper," and he says, "Up your nose with a rubber hose. We are going to stick with the book." And his people were called Nestorians.

I was told all my early years by modern scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, "You are just following a man." I would always say back, "That is what the Bible says I am supposed to do. Amen, brother."

*1 Corinthians 11:1*

*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

You claim me a follower and this guy, who told you there were mistakes in that King James Bible? So you are studying one night and the Holy Spirit of God came down and put His arm around you and illuminated a room with that little golden finger and said, "See that right there? That is from Me. But I was wrong. You see this verse here and this verse here? I put that in there. I am the Holy Spirit of God. I screwed up. That is a contradiction." Did God show you those mistakes? No, some man showed you those mistakes. You say, "Well, you are following a man." Who are you following? Everybody follows somebody. You better do, folks, you better follow the right man. That is all. The idea where you are following a man, you are following a man. Everybody follows somebody.

I had a Catholic one time, he said, "You believe the King James Bible is the absolute word of God." I said, "I do." He said, "Then you get on me for having a pope?" I said, "Yes, I do." He says, "You got a paper pope. That is all you got. Your Bible is a paper pope." I said, "Amen, brother. What do you mean?" I said, "I believe it is a paper pope. At least mine is sinless. That is better than I can say for yours." Everybody is following somebody. Make sure you follow the right man who has got the right Bible, the right line, in the right church, with the right doctrine, with the right fruit. All down through history.

Paul confirmed this when he said to young Timothy:

*2 Timothy 2:2*

*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

Somebody is always following somebody. You just make sure you are following the right person. Real Bible truth has been passed down through the true line of the church from Paul to today. It is established truth.

Also Paul tells us, dealing with heresy:

*1 Corinthians 11:19*

*For there must also be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*

See that, what a great principle that is. We always look at heresies as being bad. They can confuse a lot of people who do not know anything about the Bible. But he is saying there that a man who teaches heresy or believes some false teaching, God will use it to always show you what is real and what is approved of by God and what is not. Do you know how He does that? Two ways. Do you know what to look for?

3. Doctrine. No historical reference to what that guy believes.

I am going to tell you right now, all my ministry, I get phone calls or emails from people or somebody will get ahold of me on the phone and they will say, "Are you pastor of the church?" I said, "Yes." He says, "I am so and so and I am passing through town and I would like to come and speak to your church." I would say, "Well, I am sorry. We are all booked up. We got a full schedule." Well, he says, "I just want you to know that God has revealed to me truth that He has never revealed to anybody else. He showed me something that He has never shown anybody in the history of the church. I think your church needs to hear it." I may answer to him, "Now I know we are full up." Be careful with people like that. Be careful with guys who come in and I have them all the time. They will say, "Well, God showed me something. He did not show Pete Ruckman. He did not show this guy. He did not show that guy. God just gave me this truth. There is no place in history where anybody in the church ever believed anything like that." It is things like that that prove what is right and what is wrong because God always works through established format of truth. God has not given somebody something today that nobody else has ever seen in some major doctrine of the Bible. You think God is going to let the doctrine of the Bible go for what, 1900 years, and suddenly now He is going to change it because of you?

If that is not enough, just check their fruit basket. I have a tough time with a guy coming in and going to teach all of you the Bible and teach me the Bible when his own kids will not follow him anywhere. Something is wrong with that fruit. But by their fruit you shall know them. No barren fig trees.

Here is the absolute rule to always follow, my own personal rule. Always follow the man with the right doctrine that is provable down through the established New Testament church. There has to be an unbroken chain of evidence of Bible teaching or it is no good. The other is, you are going to have good solid men with good sound doctrine with good solid fruit. If that is not there, I am out. You say, "Well, it looks really good." I do not care how it appears. I follow a bedrock Bible doctrine.

In Christ's day, it was the same that it is today, John 7. The leaders, they were great expositors of the law. They were great scholars. They were all members of the Sanhedrin. They all had great doctrines. They loved this great spiritual in the synagogues and high places. But they were all envious of Christ, and that envy led to His death and it envy led to His rejection. They were envious of His doctrine. They were envious of His authority. They were envious that the common ordinary man was gravitated to Him, and they were envious of the fruit that He had and not them. They had, like many today, absolutely no credibility.

## IX. The Appearance of Life vs. True Credibility

I call it the Wizard of Oz principle. You all know the old 1932 Wizard of Oz with Judy Garland in it and the Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion and the Scarecrow. My kids grew up with it. We probably still have it on some tape someplace. My girls grew up watching it. Every time it came on they would watch the Wizard of Oz. It is a great classic. But it always illustrated to me the appearance of life. Dorothy, who was from Kansas by the way, she was following her dream on the Yellow Brick Road. She wanted to get back to Kansas. That was her first mistake. If God gets you out of Kansas in a whirlwind, that is the hand of God. The only other greater miracle than that would be getting me out of Raytown. Raytown, Missouri, living proof that hell is full of dead men walking the streets.

Anyway, she meets these three guys. They also have some issues. She is trying to get to the Emerald City. That is a picture of New Jerusalem, Revelation 21. So they are following a Yellow Brick Road, a picture of the Word of God. They are going down through this thing. There is a woman that wants to stop them, the Wicked Witch of the West. By the way, she left our church about 9 or 10 years ago. I am just kidding. Kind of kidding. Anyway, so they are walking down this thing. They finally want to get to see the wizard. Because the wizard has all the answers. The wizard, he has all the answers. So they get down finally to Oz, and here is the wizard. They are looking around and there is lightning and flashing and they hear this big booming voice. They are all in awe. "Here we are. We finally made it. Here is the place we want to be, the wizard." All this stuff.

All of a sudden, little Toto, he is the dog. It always takes a little mutt to expose the wizards of Oz. So they are over there and this Toto is barking and he starts pulling back this curtain. Here is the wizard, so called, manipulating all of that stuff to give the appearance that it is really real. Then when Toto, that would be me, starts exposing the wizard, you get this big booming voice, "Pay no attention to that man behind that curtain." That is what the world wants to tell you. When you get into your Bible and that Bible starts to show you the truth about the world, what is going on, Christ's coming, and everything about your life, you are going to hear this big booming

voice from the government, from the educators, from everybody, "Pay no attention to that little dog nipping at my heels." It was a phony. It was a phony. It is just like life. Watch people going down a yellow brick road looking for something that only the appearance is there.

It was not until the good fairy showed up, and I use the word fairy lightly, but putting it into the context of the story, you get my drift. That kind. That fairy always to me, she got them on the right track. To me, that is a picture of salvation as of the Jew. You had a wicked witch and you had a good lady who had truth. The wicked witch wanted to deceive them and stop them, but the good witch, whatever witch she was, she wanted to get them the truth and get them where they really wanted to go because everything they were going, she woke up at the end of the thing, remember? And the whole thing was a dream. So many of God's people are living that same dream. You are trying to get somewhere that is going to be an end dead end street.

All life is manipulating everything around you from the government to religion to everything in this world. It is somebody behind the scenes pulling the levers. You are never going to get truly home that way until you get the truth. Listen. The greatest tools of Satan today will not be the government, though they would be hard to beat. It will not be the world system. That would be hard to beat. The greatest tools of Satan today will be just like it was at the first coming of Christ. It will be God's people. It will be men and women who have no fruit, they have no authority, they have nothing. Yet they want to give the appearance and all they do is destroy everything that God is trying to do. The devil will use them to divide you from your church, divide you from your Bible, and divide you from your relationship with Christ all under the appearance. So you too can be a barren fig tree.

For a child of God, you can be one of three trees found in the Bible.

4. You can be a tree of knowledge of good and evil. You just go shoot your mouth off about what is wrong and what you think. Facts, but no faith. Just a lot of talk, but no real action.
5. Or you can be a barren fig tree. You can give the appearance and be a tree, but there is just no fruit on you anywhere, shape, or form. So you just give the appearance.
6. Or you can be a tree of life.

*Proverbs 11:30*

*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.*

*Psalms 1:1-3*

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

There is a season to our fruit bearing. Mine is almost over. Most of you, praise the Lord, are just starting. But there is a season to it. The only way you are going to get to that point is to come to the place where you realize that you have to put doctrine in your life. You have to put the right

Bible in your life. You have to follow the right people in your life and God will produce the right fruit in your life. It is just that simple.

A tree planted by the river of waters. That is Ezekiel 45, 46, 47, 48. The tree of life planted on the river of waters coming out of the holy sanctuary. That is a beautiful picture of us as Christians with our roots down deep in the Holy Spirit of God.

## X. The Church's Role in Cultivating Fruit

That is why in the book of Acts both Paul and Timothy are such models for all of us. They got saved. They get into a New Testament local church, the church in Antioch that is a Bible believing church. Antioch of Syria is the hotbed of Bible Christianity for the first 300, 400 years after Christ before the Ottoman Turks take over, the Byzantine Empire goes away. They grow and through that growth of ministry of them getting in the right place with the right people with the right Bible, God establishes them. Now they are recognized by the body of Christ within that church and now they have what the cultists do not have. What the scribes and the Pharisees did not have. Which everybody out there, both the God's people, now you have credibility. Now you are credible. You are not credible because you say you are credible. You are not credible because you give the appearance of being credible. You are credible because people can look at your family, they can look at your life, they look at your church, they look at your Bible, and they see God's hand in your life. They may not like you like they did not like Christ. They may not like you. They may slander you. But at the end of the day, they have to envy you because you have something that they do not have, credibility. God is using you. You cannot deny that.

You may not like so and so out there for this or that or what he preaches or the way he preaches like it was Billy Sunday or J. Frank Norris or even Dr. Ruckman. But you cannot deny that God used them. In the same breath that God used them, you have got to look at yourself and examine yourself and know yourself and prove yourself, and you know He is not using you.

We are having leadership coming up. I think this is great. 89 people. 89 people. That is unbelievable. 89 people. There is something going on here in the lives of people because of that book you hold in your lap. 89 people. We are going to take that and we are going to make you better. We are going to take every aspect of that thing and we are going to help you grow. We are going to help you get established and we are going to give you through this church the credibility you need to do the work that He is going to judge you at, at the judgment seat of Christ, the work that He started in you in Philippians 1:6. He has begun a good work in you and will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, rapture of the church. That is what we are all about. Taking people who get saved and now are better than you were, unsaved, and then through the Word of God, through pruning you as a husbandman, through us taking you like Jordan coming over here and the people who we have got here now, they will come in and the people that just keep getting saved helping you be better. Bringing you to the place in your life that you can be everything God wants you to be. That is what the job of the church is.

We will hold up there. Let us have a word of prayer. We will hold up there.