

# Guarding What God Gives

by Alan Martin

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of not just hearing the word of God, but also guarding it carefully in our hearts and lives. It highlights the consequences of neglecting God's commands, using examples from Solomon's life and the parable of the sower to illustrate the impact of how we hear and apply God's word. The key message is to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, knowing that everything else will be added when we prioritize God's ways.*

**Duration:** 54:44

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 11:10, Psalm 103:17, Luke 8:15, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Hearing and Guarding God's Word", "Prioritizing the Kingdom of God"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I've been considering teaching through a book, possibly the book of Ephesians, just to go through something that contains kind of the heart of Paul to the church, rather than just trying to think each week, you know, pick a topic to share. I thought of, I'm thinking about it, but before I did so, I wanted to explain something. Nothing I teach, nothing that's said in Sunday school, not a conversation that you have here in church will do you any good unless you retain it.

You only gain from what you receive and guard carefully. And that's, I think I need to lay that foundation because there is a condition the Bible warns about, having eyes and not seeing, having ears and not hearing, having a heart, but there being no understanding to it. And that can happen to anyone.

And I wanted to start off to give you an example from the Old Testament, from the person who, when you ask a group of people, who's considered the wisest man in the Bible, there's usually one answer. What would you say? Who's the wisest man in the Bible? Most people say Solomon because that's what's associated with him. Because the scripture says that God appeared to Solomon on two occasions and filled Solomon with the spirit of wisdom and understanding.

And Solomon was given understanding into architecture and nature and agriculture and livestock to degrees that emissaries that were sent from other nations and other kings were amazed at the wisdom that Solomon displayed and his judgment and discernment. In one instance, a person said that what they had been told wasn't even half of what they observed. He was so wise.

And yet, this is what is said of Solomon. Let me read this in 1 Kings 11, verses 10 to 11. And this is after a list of things that Solomon had begun to do.

A person who was a son of King David, whom the Lord had appeared to twice and filled with wisdom and understanding. Solomon began in chapter 10 of 1 Kings to accumulate large amounts of gold and silver. Deuteronomy 17 said the kings weren't supposed to do that.

He made gold so plentiful, silver didn't even matter. They stopped counting the value. He would import over 600 and something talents of gold a year.

And the talents may be close to 2000 pounds. So rich beyond anyone. Kings were warned not to do that.

Solomon began to accumulate large amounts of horses and chariots. The kings were warned in Deuteronomy chapter 17 not to do that. And at the beginning of Deuteronomy chapter 17, one of the first instructions to a king was the king was to write his own handwritten copy of the first five books, Genesis through Deuteronomy.

The king was to write his own handwritten copy of the first five books called the Torah and read from it every day of his life so that he would not become conceited and he would not forget how to live according to the covenant and God's instructions. So I'm assuming Solomon would have had his own handwritten copy of Genesis to Deuteronomy. And in chapter 17 of Deuteronomy, it said, these are instructions that Solomon's own hand had written.

Do not amass large amount of horses. And it says, and do not send back to Egypt to buy them because Egypt was famous for its Arabian horses. And guess where Solomon imported horses from, Egypt.

Solomon imported chariots also from Egypt. And beyond that, if you know the law, the Israelites were to marry fellow Israelites. They were specifically warned not to take daughters from the surrounding nations for their sons and not to give their daughters to the sons of surrounding nations.

They were to marry fellow Israelites. Well, guess what Solomon began to do. Solomon began to marry many women, not just a few.

Solomon married 700 times. Now, maybe a lot of those were political reasons. We don't know.

But he began to marry Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Canaanite, he began to marry the women that all through the law of Moses, the Israelites were forbidden to marry. And it said, not only did he marry them, it says his heart clung fast to them in love. So much so that when they started missing their own culture and how they were raised, they began to ask him to build them a temple like they were used to worshiping in and an idol that they were used to worshiping.

And guess what Solomon did. Solomon accommodated his wives and he himself built temples for them and the idol for them so that they could worship. And since that was the direction he was heading, guess what the next step he did? Not only did he build it for them to worship, he began to worship with them in

these temples that he had built for them.

And then that leads us to this verse in 1 Kings 11, verses 10 through 11. Although God had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not guard the Lord's command. So the Lord said to Solomon, since this is your attitude and you did not guard my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.

And that's the word I want to underscore, guard. It's the reason I like the word guard because I studied the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament and guard is rarely used in the New Testament, but it means more than just obey. It's something that's entrusted to you that you have to soberly and carefully keep track of.

Maybe the root of the idea is keep your eye on it. Don't let this out of your sight is the idea. And it was this attitude of guarding, keeping your eye on it and being faithful to it that was so pleasing to God about Abraham.

Listen to what the Lord said about Abraham. This conversation takes place in Genesis chapter 18, when the Lord and two other angels came and visited Abraham, when the Lord was on his way to see about Sodom and Gomorrah. This is a conversation that he had.

And this is a conversation he had with the two angels. This is Genesis chapter 18, verse 19. For I have chosen Abraham so that he will direct his children and his household after him to guard the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised.

And a little later, not to Abraham, but to one of Abraham's descendants. I believe this was to Jacob. This is when he became Isaac.

In Genesis chapter 26, the Lord said, because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, he guarded my commands and my decrees and my instructions. That was Abraham's heart. He guarded whatever God told him, he guarded it.

And I believe it's for this reason, Abraham is the only person in the Old Testament that is referred to in this way. Abraham was called God's friend, the friend of God. And it's because I believe that he guarded everything God spoke to him so carefully.

And when I read that and I realized that it brought to mind something that Jesus said. You remember what Jesus said in the New Testament? Jesus said this in John chapter 15, greater love has no man than this that he laid down his life for his friends. He told his disciples, you're not my servants.

I'm calling you my friends, but he put this qualification. You are my friends if you do what I command. That's the clarification he gave to them.

So obviously Jesus considers how we respond to his word as a reflection of how our heart is towards him. The way we respond to his word shows how much we love him. And if you, Jesus said, if you wanna be my friend, you guard what I tell you.

In the people of Israel, if you want a general description of what went wrong for them, because they were people that God saved from the land of Egypt to become his very own prized possession. Out of all the nations of the earth, God chose them and gave them the opportunity to have the kind of dynamically

intimate and special relationship with him that no other nation would enjoy. They would be blessed in ways no one else would bless.

They would be spared from difficulties other nations and other peoples would not be spared, but continually the history of the people of Israel was they did not guard what God gave them to follow. This is what it says. And they were told if they guarded it, how well it would go for them.

This is in Exodus chapter 19, verses five and six. This is what the Lord spoke to them. Now, if you obey me fully and guard my covenant, then out of all the nations, you will be my treasured possession.

Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. You recognize that phrase? That's in first Peter. You are a royal priesthood, a kingdom, a holy nation.

And Israel had the opportunity to be this with God if they had guarded the covenant. It says, these are the words that you were to speak to the Israelites. And what that reminds me, this special relationship, this dynamic relationship that Israel had the opportunity to enjoy with the creator of the universe, they blew because they refused to guard what God said to them.

Listen to this same concept, this same truth from John chapter 15. This is Jesus during the last evening he spent with his disciples before his arrest. These are his words talking to his disciples about the special relationship they could enjoy with him.

I am the vine, you are the branches. If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit because apart from me, you can do nothing. If you do not abide in me, you are like a branch that is thrown out and withers and such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

But if you abide in me and my words abide in you. Now, how do his words abide in them? How does God's word abide in us? Only to the degree we guard it. If we guard it, keep it, remember it, protect it, keep our eye on it, not lose sight of it.

If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask what you will, it shall be given you. That is a special relationship with the Lord Jesus based upon, based upon guarding his words. In John chapter eight, Jesus said something very similar.

And he said it, it says to the Jews who had believed in him. So let's say, I'm gonna assume that those sitting in front of me now, you've believed in the Lord Jesus. So I'm gonna use Jesus' own words to you like he's spoken to the Jews.

To you who believe in me, if you continue in my word, then are you really my disciples? Believing in Jesus doesn't make you a disciple. That makes you a person who believed in Jesus. What makes you a disciple? Continuing in his word.

If you continue in my words, then you are truly my disciples. And then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free. Many people only quote the second half of that truth.

You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free. No one can come to a knowledge of the truth who doesn't continue in the words of Jesus. And how do we continue in the words of Jesus? It must, there must be some volition and consciousness and intent for us to do so, or he wouldn't say if you continue.

Is it possible to begin following the words of Jesus and not continue? To fail, to guard, to lose sight of, to forget? Then you may not genuinely be a disciple. If that's what happened, what you may be is just a person who has believed in Jesus, but if you're not continuing in his word, you're not learning about him still. You could be like Solomon, who though God had appeared to him twice, Solomon did not guard and keep before him what God had spoken.

And Solomon lost the special relationship he had. And we can lose the special relationship we have with the Lord if we're not careful. John knew this.

John was there because we've been reading these verses we've just read are from John in his letter, 1 John. John wrote the gospel of John, 1, 2, and 3 John and the revelation. What I'm gonna quote to you now from is his first letter, 1 John 2, 1-3.

John wrote, we know that we've come to know him if we are keeping his commands. So how do you really know you know the Lord? By keeping his commands. You can't know it because I baptized you in this baptism.

You can't know it because you're a member on the role of this church. You can't know it because you claim to believe in Jesus with your mouth. John was already seeing that there were people who claimed to believe in Jesus, but not following him.

So that's why John wrote this. And it's just as pertinent today as it was then. By this, we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.

Whoever says I know him, but is not doing what he commands is a liar and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love in that individual is truly made complete. This is how we know we are in him.

Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did. Now, follow me. So if you claim that you are a Christian, listen, if we claim we are Christians, if we claim we know the Lord Jesus, the only way we can know it for sure, by this we know that we are really his.

We are keeping his commandments. And anyone who says, I know Jesus, it says, whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did. That's the key.

Must live as Jesus did. How did Jesus live? Here's what it says in John chapter 15. Jesus gives these instructions to his disciples in John 15.

And it's like this, you do exactly as I do. So these two verses go perfectly together. What does it look like to live as Jesus lived? This is in John chapter 15, verses nine and 10.

As the father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now, remain or abide in my love. And then he says, if you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just like I keep my father's commands and remain in his love.

So do you get it? How did Jesus live? He kept the father's commands and remained in the father's love. What is living like Jesus lived look like for us? We keep Jesus's commands and we live in his love. It's all about, are we guarding what God has spoken to us? Because it can be a problem.

The problem with the people of the first covenant was that they did not guard and keep God's commands. Listen to this. This is the promise to them.

And this is in the book of Psalms. The book of Psalms, if you want to be blessed, I married a very godly lady. You've been around her enough to know that I'm not exaggerating.

She's a godly lady. She loved the book of Psalms. It's like, that was like almost everything when I first was meeting her, she was always quoting something from the book of Psalms.

This is from the book of Psalms, chapter 103. From everlasting to everlasting, the Lord's love is with those who fear him and his righteousness is with their children's children. Boy, don't you want that to be true of you from everlasting to everlasting? Don't you want God's love to be with you? And don't you want his righteousness, not just to be with you, but to be with your children and your grandchildren? Listen to what it says.

From everlasting to everlasting, God's love is with those who fear him and his righteousness to their children's children, to the ones who are guarding his covenant. If you guard his covenant, his everlasting love will be with you. If you guard his covenant and walk in his righteousness, his righteousness will be to you, your children and your children after you.

But that's to those who guard his covenant, who keep their eye on his covenant, who remember what he says, who take it to heart, who never take their eyes off of it. This is what it says, Jeremiah chapter 16, verses 10 and 11. This is what a summary.

If you want to understand what I've been talking about, how the people of Israel did not guard God's covenant, you can read, you can see it in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and every other prophet. Every other, just read the prophets and you'll see it is a history of people not guarding God's covenant and God attempting to get them back to guarding his covenant. That's the story of the prophets.

This is just one expression from the prophet Jeremiah chapter 16, verses 10 and 11. When you tell these people and they ask you, why has the Lord decreed such a great disaster against us? Now this happens, Jeremiah has been asking the Lord, how come you're letting this happen? Because the Lord had raised up the Babylonians, a great nation, and actually was sending the Babylonians to destroy the city of Jerusalem and the land of Judea. His own people.

He was sending the Babylonians to destroy his own temple and to slaughter his own people. And of course, the people were gonna ask, why in the world would you actually allow another nation that doesn't know you to slaughter your own people who do? And that's the context of this answer. When you tell these people all this and they ask you, why has the Lord decreed such a great disaster against us? What wrong have we done? What sin have we committed against the Lord, our God? Then say to them, it is because your ancestors forsook me, declares the Lord, and they followed other gods and served and worshiped them.

They forsook me and did not guard my law. They did not guard my law. Now, why did he say the ancestors? Because evidently the people who are asking the question are not the same as the ancestors.

But follow me. If you don't guard what God has told you, your kids won't guard it. They won't even know it.

They'll be worshipping something wrong and doing it because they didn't learn it from you. And they're still held accountable by God for what you didn't pass on to them. You didn't guard it.

They didn't get it. You can only pass on what you're actually guarding yourself. And if you disregard it, believe me, your children and your grandchildren will disregard it also.

It doesn't guarantee just because you guard it that they will. It's not always our fault if children or grandchildren don't follow the Lord, but the best hope they have is that they see how carefully you guard the way of the Lord and then they follow. So really what pertains to us, how does this apply to us today? Because we are the people of the new covenant.

And I think we should be glad that we're not people of the first covenant because in the first covenant, every violation of the law received, it's just punishment. And if there was one area of the law that you weren't faithful in, you were guilty of the entire law. That's according to the first covenant.

We're not people of the first covenant. We're the people of the second covenant. So we should breathe easier and kick back because we're not as responsible as they are, are we? Now we're people of grace, right? Listen to what the writer of Hebrews said.

Chapter two, verses one through three. We must pay even more careful attention than them. We must pay even more careful attention.

Therefore, to what we have heard so that we do not drift away. For since the message spoken through angels was binding and every violation and disobedience received, it's just punishment. How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? This is something that I've come to see that this is the important point.

Don't get hung up on whether a person can lose their salvation or not. This is the question. Can a person neglect their salvation? And the point is, we're supposed to pay even more careful attention than the people of the first covenant because every violation and disobedience from their not guarding what God gave them received it's just punishment.

And we've received something greater than they did. How are we gonna escape if we don't guard what God has given us? And you know what the opposite of guarding something is? You're not guarding it, you're not taking care of it. You're not keeping your eye on it.

You're not giving yourself to it. What is it? You're neglecting it. What you don't guard, you end up neglecting.

And I'm just gonna, I don't even know what the answer is. Then you know the writer of Hebrews didn't give the answer but here he gives a question. How are we gonna escape if we neglect so great a salvation? When the people from the first covenant, even what was spoken by angels because it was the angel of the Lord who declared the law to Moses, but it's the son of God, the exact representation of the being of God, his very son who has spoken to us.

And his word is greater than the word of any angel. If they were punished for not guarding, how are we going to escape if we neglect what has been spoken to us? That's how that pertains to us. How important is this to the Lord Jesus? I'm just gonna recall.

It's not important where this is. It's in Luke chapter 11, but that's not so important. You remember the account? People are emotional and they're human.

One time Jesus was teaching and a lady in the crowd cried out, oh, blessed is the woman who gave you birth and who nursed you. She was just probably just so filled with all of his teachings. You would think that Jesus would just be, well, thank you.

That's not what he did. He said, rather blessed are those who hear the word of God and guard it. He used the same word.

He's just the son of God with perfect wisdom. And here he gives us a key, how to be blessed. You want your life to be blessed in 2023? Hear the word of God and guard what you hear.

That's how you'll be blessed. It's not about some person, some other person. Another time, Jesus was told that his mother and his brothers were standing outside.

They wanted to speak to him. You remember what he said that time? Here's what he said. Who is my mother? And who is my brother? And who is my sister? Whoever does the will of my father, he is my brother, my sister, and my mother.

How important it is to Jesus that we do the will of the father, that we do the will of God. It says, Jesus came to save us from living according to our own ideas. And the only way that that salvation has its full effect is if we hear what he says, we take it to heart, we guard it, and we keep it.

You know, Jesus finished, this is the last part of his sermon, the greatest sermon he ever spoke is considered to be the Sermon on the Mount. That's what most people say, that the greatest sermon he ever spoke was the Sermon on the Mount. You can read it in Matthew chapter five, six, and seven.

But he finished the greatest sermon that he ever taught or spoke with this. This is the end of the Sermon on the Mount. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my father in heaven.

Now, every single one of us here, it would seem to me, it would be right for us to want assurance that we're going to heaven. Now, many preachers give you that assurance by, well, didn't you come down and didn't you confess and didn't you ask Jesus to come in your heart and didn't you say that prayer? Okay, is that how Jesus said they should have assurance? You know what the greatest assurance that you'll enter into the kingdom of heaven is? You do the will of the father. That's what gives you assurance.

Because everyone who does the will of the father, you know what they're gonna hear when they enter the kingdom of heaven? What Jesus is gonna say to those who do the will of the father, well done, thou good and faithful servant. And the reason he says well done is because they actually did the will of the father. There are people who've made a confession, a public profession of faith in a church, been baptized in a baptism, not even attending church, never even reading the Bible, getting drunk, taking drugs, divorced, married three, four times.

And they think they're going to heaven based upon something they did in the past. And I say it's false assurance to tell a person that because of something they did in the past, they're going to enter the kingdom of heaven rather than taking the words of the Lord Jesus. My sheep, they know me and they do what? Follow me and I give them eternal life.

Those who follow Jesus Christ receive eternal life. And you know what they do when they follow Jesus Christ? They do the will of the father. And when they stand before the Lord Jesus, they will be well received because they were genuine believers who live by faith.

They follow Jesus. They guarded what Jesus gave to them. They did not neglect it.

That's how this pertains to us. And Jesus goes on to say that many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did not we prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform any miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you away from me, you who did evil. What do you think doing evil? Can we, let me see if you're understanding me today.

Give me two words. No, well, give me the idea. You know, it's not a number of words.

What would doing evil be according to today's message? Right, not doing his will. Not guarding what God has said. That's what evil is.

Doing evil is doing what you do when you've quit guarding what he gave you. Doing evil is what a person does when they quit guarding what God has spoken. It may be natural to them.

It may seem right to them, but only those who guard what God has given are faithful. They're the friends of the Lord Jesus. They know him, they follow him, and he gives them eternal life.

And Jesus followed this statement with the parable. You remember the parable? The wise, we used to sing it as children. The wise man built his house upon the rock.

The wise man built his house upon the rock. Remember, it said a wise man dug down deep and laid his house upon a rock. Now, back in the days before they had plumbing, they didn't have saws.

There was no San Antonio water supply. Where would you build your house? You place your house somewhere near fresh water. You need water.

So you're going to put it near a fresh water supply. Well, if you're near enough to a fresh water supply, you should know that if it rains and there's excess water, you better anticipate something we call flooding. It doesn't rain a whole lot of San Antonio, but when it does rain a lot, what happens? It floods.

Okay, so this man anticipated it, and he dug down deep, and he built his house on a rock. And here's what Jesus said this man was like. He anticipated difficulty ahead of time, and he wanted to make sure the foundation of his house was on the bedrock.

He said, this man is like a man who hears my word and puts it into practice. It's what the man practices. You know, people talk about preachers.

Well, he practices what he preaches, or he doesn't practice what he preaches. Listen, every single one of us better practice what we hear if you want to go to heaven. That's what the point is.

Every single one of us better practice what God says, or else we're not going to be like this wise man. The difference, there was another man, a foolish man. The wise man, and here's the key, the foundation and bedrock, the unshakable stable is hearing and practicing.

But the foolish man built his house on the sand. I have a feeling that these two guys were neighbors, not some different. I believe they were building their houses by the same river.

And I believe if one guy was digging deep to lay his foundation on the bedrock, and the other guy was just built his foundation on the sand, which house do you think went up faster? The second one, right? The guy's just building it up on the sand. He could get started right away. You level the sand, get going, start.

And so his house was probably finished first. He probably moved in first. Everything looked good.

And Jesus said, this man, this man building this house is like a man who hears my word, but does not put it into practice. So you have a man that hears God's word and puts it into practice. And you have a man that hears God's word and doesn't put it into practice, just like it might be the case right here.

We might have some here who are hearing me, and you don't practice what you hear. And we may have some here that hear, and you do practice it. Well, here we have these two houses.

He's in the same neighborhood, right? Maybe right next to each other. Then suddenly it started raining. That's what Jesus said, the rains came down.

And of course they keep raining, the floods came up. And then when the flood came and it said, and the wind blew, because usually if you're gonna have a severe storm, it's gonna be windy and it's gonna be a deluge. And so it's a perfect picture of a storm.

And when the water came up, it said both the water and the wind began to beat against both houses. And which house do you think stood? The one that had been founded upon the rock. And so there's two lives, just like there may be two lives here.

Someone who hears God's word and puts it into practice, everything he hears. And someone who hears God's word and doesn't put it into practice. Something is coming in your life.

A tragedy, a storm is gonna wreck your life. And you know what? Only those who are practicing God's word will stand. Those who are hearing and not practicing will be swept away.

It happens. Hearing is not enough. Hearing and doing.

You know, and to underscore this, to finish this, this sermon today, to wrap this up, Jesus, I think his greatest parable that underscores this more than any other is the parable of the sower. Then all three gospels, Mark chapter four, Matthew chapter 12, and Luke chapter eight, the parable of the sower. It's all three, it's all three gospels.

And it's a parable about a man sowing, but the parable is about the different ways people listen and hear. Just sum it up short. He describes four types of soil.

The path where people walk on, and there are paths between the rows. I used to garden in Missouri, and I would tell my children, stop walking where we're planting! Stay on the path! Because you could pack the path, you walk in the path and you pack all the dirt, nothing would grow there. I didn't want to plant anything there.

But if you're scattering seed and it happens to fall where the ground is packed, it's just going to lay there. That's one type of soil, the path where it's packed, it's hard. Another type of soil where it was shallow.

Two, if there's rocks in soil, you're not going to get very deep if you only go over it once or twice. You have to keep working the soil to get it deep. So Jesus described the rocky soil that was kind of shallow.

Jesus described another type of soil, a soil that appeared to be worked a little more, but the soil still had roots and the seeds from former thorns and weeds that were still there. And then he described one soil that was good and fruitful. And this is a summary in how it relates to people who hear, the way you hear.

He tied the type of soil to the type of hearing. And here's just in simple, the path, the path of those who are hard of hearing and one ear out the other. It doesn't affect them.

They're not intimidated. They don't care. This is wrong to go and do it.

They're not scared. They can't come to church when they want to. That preacher and those people, they don't intimidate me at all.

They are hard. They don't hear. That's the path, people on the path.

Then there's the shallow soil. Remember what he said about the shallow soil and the way they hear? Oh, wow, I believe. It says they believe.

They receive, actually they receive the word with joy. Their first response is, oh, this is wonderful. I believe.

But the soil is shallow. And what doesn't happen is they don't grow roots. And just like what happens in Texas, it gets hot.

And if you don't have a deep root system and the sun comes out and starts baking the ground, it says they withered. These plants that sprung up right away, they only remained for a little while because they had no roots and they withered. They quickly fell away.

Something happens, and this is what happens to people who are only hearing shallow and they're not guarding it. It doesn't deepen their life. It's not a deep work.

They last for a while and they're gone. Only those who become rooted and established get through this type of hearing. But this type of hearing takes a lot of people.

There are those who believe for a while. Some of your children believe for a while. Well, you made them go to church.

They believed even all the way up to their youth group. Where are they now? They serving the Lord now? You believe for a while and stop believing. That's what this type of soil.

And the other soil was, I call the overgrown soil. Because my garden, I would plow it enough and I would till in the same area where when I was done plowing, you saw nothing but dirt. Nothing but dirt.

And so I planted. And what I planted is what came up. That's the first thing you saw.

Because as soon as it was plowed and ready, I planted. So the first thing that came up was what I planted. Only problem is there were other things that were already in that dirt that were waiting their turn too.

Like the seeds that had been from the season before and some of the roots of the thorns and things that hadn't been fully broken up were still there. And what happened is I was happy my stuff was growing. But I got busy and the summer would go along and I'd pick tomatoes and I'd pick squash and I'd share with my neighbors.

And all along, I kind of get distracted. The other stuff that was in the soil began to grow too. And you know what happens? It says, what Jesus said is, but the thorns and thistles begin to grow.

And you know what they do? If you don't check them, if you don't check that growth, you know what that growth does? That growth chokes what you've planted. So what caused, what allowed all of those weeds and thorns and thistles to get so big that it actually choked what I planted? What allowed that? My neglect. You know how you stop that from happening? It's called a hoe.

You hoe, you weed. Listen, the things we allow into our life that we don't choke out, will come in and choke the word of God. So it doesn't matter how good I might preach.

It doesn't matter how well Tom might teach. It doesn't matter what preacher you listen to. If you're allowing things to grow in your life that need to be weeded out, you're not gonna make it.

It's not gonna bear fruit. That's what Jesus said. The weeds took over and they choked the good seed that had been planted so that it never reached fruit.

It never bore fruit. And then he said, and there's the key to underscore what we've been talking about today, the good soil. Listen to his description of the good soil.

And this is in Luke chapter eight. The seed on the good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart who hear the word, keep it, and by persevering, produce a crop. You hear the three things? You hear, but then you guard, you keep.

Because hearing and not keeping doesn't bear fruit. You hear, you keep, you endure, and you will bear fruit. The good soil.

So, and to almost give a key to unlock this parable because the disciples didn't even fully get it at first. Because when they asked him, they asked him when he gave his parable, how can you talk to us? Can you explain things to us, but to the people you speak in parables? Here's what he said. It's been given to you, it's been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to them it's not been given.

So that it's fulfilled in the saying of Isaiah, where the saying that Isaiah was given when he said, Lord, here am I, send me. This is what Isaiah was sent out to say. Have eyes, but never see.

Have ears, but never hear. Go make the heart of this people calloused. Because that was their attitude towards the Lord.

They had eyes, but they weren't watching carefully. They had ears, but they weren't listening carefully. They were not guarding what God said.

And here's what Jesus gives in this illustration. Be very careful how you hear. Be very careful how you hear.

For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. I want an illustration of that. The measure you use.

This is what came to me. Maybe it'll help you. This is this time of year.

When you really like something, when it's your favorite dish and someone's serving it, what do you say? How much would you like? A lot! Pile it on! But what if it's something you're not sure about? What if it's not one of your sole favorites or you haven't tried it? What do you say? You don't want to be polite. You don't want to hurt someone's feelings. What do you say? I'll try a little.

Oh, God's word means a little bit to you. Yeah, give me a little, Pastor. It's your favorite thing.

You can't get enough of it. You want seconds and thirds. See, with the measure you use, the things you value, you want a lot of.

And Jesus is just being as honest with people as I can. When it comes to hearing and doing, you're only gonna do what you really want to do. It's so important that we get the heart that hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

Because all those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. Pile it on, Father. Teach me your way.

Show me your way. Fill me with your blessing. Give me understanding.

Get, pile it on. Because Jesus went on to say, to him who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance. But to him who just asked for a little, even what he thinks he has shall be taken from him.

It's just, can't get around it. So I realized that something. It doesn't matter whether I teach through any book of the Bible.

It's only going to do good to the people who guard everything they hear. And if I don't seek to make sure that's the heart you have, I'm just talking to the ear. I don't wanna do that.

I wanna make sure you understand. Whatever we talk about, whatever we seek to understand, only to the degree we guard what we hear will it bless us. One last example, I'm done.

This is an example to see if you get this. You wanna be blessed in this year? All of us are concerned about the coming year, paying bills, eating health, those things that are important. Listen to what Jesus said.

See if you really heard this and see if you've guarded this. Are you guarding this? Seek ye first, what? The kingdom of God and his? And then what did he say? Well, what do you follow that with? And all these things will be added. So what are we supposed to seek first? The first priority, his kingdom and righteousness.

And then everything else will be added. You know what a lot of people are doing? They seek all the added stuff first. And with the leftover, they seek the kingdom.

I haven't guarded what he said. And they're wondering why this other stuff is not being added. Why isn't God adding to my life? Why am I not being blessed? It's because that's what you're seeking.

You're seeking the things that are only promised to be added to those who are seeking first, the kingdom. Just an example, all right? I want you to be blessed by the word of God, but I can't make you guard it. What I will tell you is this, you will never gain from God's word what you are not guarding very carefully.

Got it? All right.

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