

# Temporary Believers

by Ernest C. Reisinger

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a performing people, producing fruit and finishing well, and warns against the dangers of temporary believers who fall away due to unchanged minds, slavish fears, shame and pride, and guilt and hardening of hearts.*

**Duration:** 59:04

**Scripture:** Mark 8:6, Luke 8:4-8, Luke 8:13, Hebrews 6:4-6

**Topics:** "Believers"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the parable of the sower, which is considered a key parable in the Bible. The parable is found in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke, with slight variations. The preacher explains that the parable teaches about four different types of people represented by the soil. These four types include those whose minds are not changed despite their awakened conscience, those who turn back to their old ways when the guilt wears off, those who are choked by the thorns of life, and those who receive the word of God and bear fruit. The preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding this parable as it serves as a foundation for understanding other parables in the Bible.

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## Transcript

This will be the last night that I'll be with you for a while, and I think if the great apostle Paul, if he found it necessary to ask Christians to pray for him, I don't think he did it hypocritically. I don't think he did it just to sound pious, pray for me like we sometimes say, pray for me. I don't know the relationship between the cry of God's people and his sovereign knowledge and his sovereign ability, but though I don't understand that relationship, I believe that there is a relationship and I believe it exists.

And therefore, in all earnestness and in seriousness, I do ask for God's people to pray for me these days when I'll be gone. Tonight, if you have your Bible, I'd like you to turn to Luke chapter 8, chapter 8. I want to read tonight a, one of the parables, I want to read tonight one of the parables that the Lord gives his own explanation of. And I would like to say just a little bit about it before I read it.

First of all, let me say that this is a key parable, it's the parable of the sower. Bishop Ryle thinks that this parable should be preached on much, and I suppose it's one of the parables that will be necessary to preach on as long as the church exists. But I say it's a key parable because when we read the account of it in Mark, Mark said that, quote, Jesus is saying, and he said to them, or this is a quote of Jesus, and he said to them, know ye not this parable, how then will you know all parables? In other words, it's the key

parable, it's the first parable.

And tonight as we look at these, the parable is given to us three times, once in Matthew chapter 13, it's given to us in Mark chapter 4, and it's given to us in Luke, with certain little variations or expansions of this parable. Now the general teaching of the parable is that there are four classes of hearers represented. Somebody's called it the parable of the soil, rather than the parable of the sower.

Because it really is the parable of the soil. And there are four classes of hearers. In this parable, as we read it, you'll see that you're somewhat, there's a test here for each one, because everyone here tonight, this includes you, boys and girls, everyone here tonight is in one of these four classes of soil.

Everyone here, you're here. I don't know if you can find yourself or not. I trust that the Spirit will assist you to help you to know yourself.

But one of the real tests, if you look, and I'm going to read the whole parable, but let me give you this little introduction first. If you look at verse 13, which is our text tonight, I only want to speak of one of the kinds of soil tonight. If you look at verse 13, before we read it, you'll see that they on the rock are they which have received the word with joy.

These have no root, which for a while bleeds, and in the time of temptation they fall away. And then if you look at the last one, there's only one true one, and that's the 15th verse, you'll find it on the, as you examine it, the things that were lacking in the spurious believer or the temporary believer, which is we're going to call him tonight, because he believed for a while, therefore he was a temporary believer. You'll find that there were three things lacking.

He lacked root, and he lacked fruit, and he lacked continuing. On the other hand, when you look at verse 15, you'll find the thing that distinguished this group is two things principally. That they brought forth fruit, not all the same, but they did bring forth fruit, and they continued.

And so the fruit and the finish are really the test in this parable. The parable would teach us that we must not just be a promising people, but that we must be a performing people. Fruit, fruit, fruit, that's the test.

And the general teaching, of course, is that you undergo a test every time you hear the word of God. Every time I open this book to read it, I undergo some sort of a test. And the test is, what kind of soil are you? The question is, what, what is the ground of your heart? And so when we read this parable tonight, I hope as you sit here, you will appoint yourself as a jury, because there's a sense in which this is true.

As you sit in this assembly, Sunday by Sunday, as a jury upon yourself, your own condition will be brought out clearly by the way you hear, by the way you receive, or by the way you refuse. But your own condition is brought out either by the way you hear, the way you receive, or the way you refuse the word of God. What fruit have you borne, you may ask yourself the question at the outset, before we even read the parable.

What fruit have you borne from all your hearings thus far? Think of the hearings. Think of how many times you've heard. And you might ask yourself, well, what, what fruit have I borne? I would venture a question to you today, and may I put it very, very pointedly.

Some of you have been hearers and hearers for years. And I ask, are you any better spiritually tonight from all your hearings, from all the hearing you've done? What a, what a list of sermons you've listened to.

Think of the Sundays when you've heard the truth.

Now when we read the parable, you'll see that. Think of the tears that's been behind some of the sermons that you've heard. Not only from those who preach them, but others who pray that God's word would be effectual in your heart.

If you are not saved yet, will you ever be saved? If you are not more holy now, will you ever be holy from hearing? Now it was the same seed as we read this parable along. I want you to note, it's the same seed. It's not some seed for me, and another kind of seed for you.

It's the same seed. It's the soil that makes the difference. Think, as we read, that some brought forth thirty, some sixty, and some a hundredfold.

So as we read it, let's bear these things in mind tonight. Someone, in looking at this this week, I saw that there was not only a lot to say about the thorns, but I found a very, for you preachers now, I'll give you a good outline. I found an outline.

We learned something about the devil in this parable, you know. And in the twelfth verse, if you just glance down, I found a fancy sermon outline. It was talking about Satan, and it said, learn about Satan's punctuality, learn about Satan's power, learn about Satan's purpose.

Now that's a, that's a quite a handy outline for a sermon, isn't it? Let me show it to you. I thought it was kind of strained a bit, but when I looked at it, I saw it's punctuality. It says, then cometh the devil.

And Mark said, immediately. And the same thing, punctuality. The power, he taketh away the word out of their hearts.

And the purpose of Satan is to prevent saving faith, lest you should believe and be saved. So the title to the, the sermon outline wasn't so bad after all. Because it was all right there.

In fact it is. I won't tell anybody, but I might use that myself sometime. Not here, since I've already told you the outline.

Let us read the parable now with these, some of these general thoughts in mind, because I want to deal with a particular truth tonight, or at least try to. And before we look to the book, let's, oh that was a wonderful song we sang about inviting the Spirit to come to our music. And that's a real prayer tonight.

I hope you saw the prayer that we sang at the outset. That was a terrific prayer. It says for children at the top of the page, but I'm not a child, and I could pray that tonight very seriously.

That whole song was a prayer. Let's pray. Blessed Lord, we thank you for your revelation to us.

And our Father, we think of the responsibility that's ours because of the many times we've handled it. Because of the many times we've read it. The fact that it's in our possession, even though it lies idly on the shelf.

Oh Lord, impress upon us tonight the responsibility, even of possessing your words. And then further impress upon us the responsibility of reading and hearing it, as well as preaching it. Deliver us from all folly.

Deliver us from all flesh. And grant us of thy Spirit, which we prayed tonight in our song. Oh come, Holy Dove, and assist us to speak and to hear tonight.

Not only here with the ears of our flesh, but oh Lord, with the inner ears of our heart. That it might be, it might change us. Oh Father, we can speak to the physical ears of men, but we do not have that facility to speak to their hearts.

And therefore, therefore Lord, we plead for great measures of your Spirit. For the sake of Jesus Christ, and in his name, and for the good of all who hear. Amen.

Verse 4, and I'll read it rapidly straight through. And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable. A sower went out to sow his seed, and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down.

And the fowls of the air devoured it, no profit. Some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

Others fell on good ground and sprang up, and bear fruit a hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And then they have that verse that speaks of judicial blindness, and I may get to that in Matthew tonight, but if I don't, may I say about this verse, that causes some people no small amount of trouble, if you'll read it in Matthew chapter 13, particularly verses 14 and 15, you'll find it's talking about judicial blindness, because they wouldn't hear.

You'll find it in Isaiah. You'll find this same principle, this same verse, this quote from Isaiah, at least five times in the New Testament. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables, that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

And now he answers their question. It was a good question they asked in verse 9, and now he answers that question. Now the parable is this.

I could wish that he explained them all, as I sometimes go to the commentaries for explanations of parables. The parable is this. The seed is the word of God.

Even the little boys and girls can understand tonight what the seed is. Jesus said it. So that's the interpretation.

Those by the wayside, are they that hear? Then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. No profession. No profession of faith.

They on the rock, are they which when they hear, receive the word with joy? These have no root, which for a while believe, and the time of temptation they fall away. And I don't know how long a while is. It may be forty years.

It may be two weeks. It may be two days. It may be a year.

But they do make a profession. Verse 14, they which fell among thorns, are they which when they have heard, go forth and are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and the distinguishing

thing about this group also, the same as the group in 13 is, bring no fruit to perfection. But they on the good ground, are they which in an honest and a good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience.

They keep it. That's continuing. They bring forth fruit.

That's the two distinguishing things. That's obvious in the text. Now tonight I want to talk about, particularly verse 13, temporary believers, which for a while believe.

Luke 8 verse 13 is not the only scripture where such teaching of temporary believers exists. We have a strong passage in Hebrews, and sometime when Mr. Davidson is not here, I'll preach on it. But as long as he's here, if he tells me when he's going away.

Hebrews chapter 6, and Donnie too, I guess. Hebrews chapter 6, maybe the Lord will get them straightened out on that before. And I can preach on it while they're here.

But if you don't believe it in Hebrews chapter 6, verse 4 to 6, which I'm not preaching on tonight, you'll see the same thing in 2 Peter. I say Luke 8 verse 13 is not the only passage that teaches something about temporary believers. We have it in these words.

For if after they have escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that means they did have some knowledge of Him. And it means there were some results of that knowledge. They escaped the pollution of the world.

The text goes on to say they are again entangled therein, and overcome the latter, and is worse with them in the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandments delivered unto them. But it has happened unto them, according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to the wallowing in the mire.

Now there are two questions that we ought to ask about temporary believers. One is how they fall away, and, or why they fall away. Maybe we should ask the first question.

Why do they, how do they fall away? Why do they fall away? And if you'll, if I may beg your indulgence to take an old book that's next to the Bible with me. Bunyan didn't miss any character. I just read last week in Christianity Today some Ph.D. from Wheaton, wrote a big article, and it brings Bunyan right up to date.

And I learned from Ms. Wenger that she's one of the most respected people on Wheaton College. And she, it's a great article in Christianity Today about Bunyan and how even people who would not particularly sympathize with Christianity say he's one of the few men that ever lived that had insight into character and insight into people. I just wish I had 50 copies of that Christianity Today because I'm always hearing this is not relevant for today.

Well, it's very relevant. If you get that, you read it. So if you'll, if I may beg your indulgence to turn again because Bunyan has a character called Mr. Temporary.

And of course he bases it on this text of Scripture that we've read tonight. I never forget the first time I saw anything in the Bible about temporary believers. I wondered where in the world would you find a text for such a thing? There's no such a thing as a temporary believer.

Well, sure enough, I found there was. Let me read to you, and bear with me for a couple minutes as I read this from Ph.D. because he deals with these two questions. Why do they fall away? And how they fall away? This is a conversation between Christian and hopeful.

And I think it's in, if I remember correctly, it's in maybe Enchanted Ground or near there somewhere. Christian. Well, then did you not know about 10 years ago one temporary in our part who was a forward man in religion then? He really made strides in religion, Mr. Temporary.

Hopeful. Know him? Yes. He dwelt in Graceless, a town about two miles off Honesty, next door to one Turnback.

Now, those names have significance. He was graceless, and he wasn't honest. And he dwelt pretty close to a fellow called Turnback.

Christian. Right. He dwelt under the same roof with him.

Well, the man was awakened once. I believe that when he had some sight of his sins and the wages that were due thereto, I believe he had some sight of that. Hopeful.

I am of your mind, for my house not being but about three miles from him, he would often come to me, and with tears truly I pitied the man. And he was not, although without hope, and he was not altogether without hope of him. I wasn't altogether without hope of him.

But one may see, it is not everyone that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter in. Christian. He told me once that he was resolved, that he had resolved to go on pilgrimage, as we do now.

But all of a sudden he grew acquainted with one, note the character, saved self. That's who he got acquainted with. He got acquainted with one saved self, and then became a stranger to me.

Hopeful. Well now, since we're talking about him, let us a little inquire into the reason of sudden backsliding of him and such others. Christian.

It may be very profitable, but do you begin? Hopeful. Well then, there are in my judgment four reasons for it. And he gives four reasons, and this is why.

Though the conscience of such men are awakened, yet their minds are not changed. Therefore, when the power of guilt weareth away, and that which provoked them to be religious ceases, wherefore they naturally turn again to their own course. Even as we see the dog, and then he uses the scripture that we read tonight.

Even as we see the dog that is sick of what he has eaten, so as long as his sickness prevails, he vomits and casts up all. Not that he does this of a free mind, but because of a troubled stomach. But now when his sickness is over, and as soon as his stomach ceases, his desire being not at all alien from the vomit, he turns again and licks up all.

And so it is the true proverb as it is written, the dog is turned to his own vomit. 2 Peter 2, 22. Thus I say, being hot for heaven by virtue only of the sense and fear of the torments of hell, as the sense of hell and fears of damnation chill and cool, so their desires for heaven and salvation cool also.

So then it comes to pass, that when their guilt and fear is gone, their desire for heaven and happiness die, and they return to their course again. That's one. This is the second reason he gives.

Another reason is, they have slavish fears that do overmaster them. I speak now, I speak now the fear they have of men. For the fear of man bringeth a snare.

Proverbs. So then, though they seem to be hot for heaven, so long as the flames of hell are about their ears, yet when the terror is a little over, they betake themselves to second thought. Better think this over.

Namely, that it is good to be wise, and not to run the hazard of losing all or less, by bringing themselves into unavoidable and unnecessary trouble. And so they fall in with the world again. What Bunyan is saying there, they won't pay the price of self-denial and cost and humiliation in this world for the fear of men.

The third reason he gives is this. The shame that attends religion, true religion, lies also as a block in their way. They are proud and haughty, and true religion in their eyes is low and contemptible.

Therefore, when they have lost their sense of hell and wrath to come, they turn again to their former course. Guilt is the fourth thing he gives. Guilt and to meditate terror.

Now that bothered me, meditate terror. And Bunyan is so filled with the Bible, you can be sure that on almost any expression you'll find scripture for what he says. And I thought, now where is that meditate terror? And if you want to see meditate terror, you'll find it in Isaiah 33, 18.

Guilt, now this is the fourth reason, I'm going to start with that again. Guilt and to meditate terror are grievous to them. They like not to see their misery before they come to it.

Though perhaps the sight of it first, if they love that sight, might make them flee whither the righteous flee and are safe. But because they do, as I hinted before, even shun the thoughts of guilt, terror, therefore, when they are rid of their awakenings about the terrors of the wrath of God, they harden their hearts gladly and choose such way as will harden them more and more. I'm going to talk about that hardening of hearts, that's the reason.

Then Christian said to Hopeful after he gave those four reasons, Christian said this, You are pretty near the business, for the bottom of all is for the want of a change of their mind and will. And therefore, they are but like the felon who standeth before the judge. He quakes and trembles and seems to repent most heartily.

But the bottom of all is his fear of the prison. Not that he hath any detestation of the offense, as is evident. Because, but let this man have his liberty, and he will be a thief in a row still.

Whereas, if his mind was changed, he would be otherwise. Hopeful. Now I have showed you the reason for his going back.

This is Mr. Temper, I remember. Now I have showed you his reason for going back. Do you show me the manner thereof? That is, what's the process? How does it take place? You young people, you listen to these reasons tonight.

They're here for you to guard against, and not you young ones only, but older too. You want to know the steps? Oh, they may not be just this order in every one, but there are some steps in this passage that is very profound and should be very helpful to you. How do they go back? Christians, so I will willingly.

First, they draw off their thoughts. All that they may from the remembrance of God, of death, and judgment to come. Secondly, then they cast off by degrees private duties as closet prayer, curbing their lusts, watching sorrow for sin and the like.

That's the second step. Third, then they shun the company of lively and warm Christians. Beware when you don't love the company of warm and lively Christians.

Fourth, after that they grow cold to public duty. First private duty, then cold to public duty, such as hearing, reading, godly conversation and the like. Then they begin to pick holes, as we say, in the coats of some of the saints, and that devilishly, that they may have a seeming excuse to throw religion behind their back.

Sixth, then they begin to adhere to, now listen, this is a very important one, then they begin to adhere to and associate themselves with carnal, loose, and wanton men. Bad company. Seventh, then they give way to carnal and wanton discourse in secret.

And glad are they if they can see such things in those that are counted godly, that they may make more boldly to do through their example. That is, hiding behind the example of some Christian. After this, they begin to play with little sins openly.

No embarrassment about it anymore. And last, and then being hardened. You notice that word before.

Then being hardened they show themselves as they are. Thus being launched again into the gulf of misery. Unless a miracle of grace prevent it, they everlastingly perish in their own deceiving.

Which brings me to something I want to speak a little about that's involved in this particular verse. And that is hardening. The Bible has a lot to say about hardening.

There are two kinds of hardening in the Bible. There is total hardening, and there is partial hardening. First, a word about total hardening that's spoken of in the Bible.

Total hardening are two kinds of total hardening of the heart, as the Bible uses that language. First, there's the natural, or universal, the hardening that everyone's born with. They've got a heart of stone.

They're naturally, by virtue of their birth, are hardened against the truth. And then there's judicial hardening that can be total, and it can be partial. Judicial hardening.

We have it in Exodus chapter 4, verse 21. It's referred to again in Romans, where we speak of God hardening Pharaoh's heart. And judicial hardening works two ways.

We have records of it in God's Word. There is the God withholding light from a man, withholding wisdom of heaven from a man, withholding understanding. That's judicial hardening, can be.

Secondly, God withholding the efficacy of the means to convict and convince and convert. But in either case, and we have that in the parable that I mentioned in verse 10, more clearly in Matthew's account of the parable, however. Now there's some things to be noted about, or observed about hardening.

I'd like to call your attention to three things particularly about this kind of hardening. One is, it is the most severe, now you get this. You think something happens to you physically, or financially, or something happens domestically, that's the worst thing can happen to you.

I say that this hardening that the Bible speaks of very clearly, many, many places, is the most severest of all divine punishments in this world. If you don't believe it, you go home and read Matthew 13. If you're not satisfied, then read Matthew, Henry's commentary on it.

On Matthew chapter 13, about divine hardening. I say first thing to observe about divine hardening is this. It's the severest punishment that can come upon a soul in this world.

Second thing to observe about it is this. It is executed toward those who are habitually wicked, and do by choice harden themselves in their sins. They do it by choice.

Romans 1, chapter 1, verse 24, verse 26, verse 28, in all three passages, you have a, somewhat of a description of those who habitually harden themselves. You have it in language like this, and God gave them up, and God gave them over. My dear friend, if God gives you up, you're gone, and you'll be comfortably so.

You won't run around and moan and mourn. You'll be quite comfortable. You won't be bothered at all by heaven or hell, or the Bible, the church, or anything else.

If God gives you over, you'll be comfortable in sin. And that's an awful state. Another thing to observe about it, there's a time when the turning point of this hardening is for eternity.

And we not only have Bible exhortations, but we have Bible examples. The conditions of these are so hardened that they are hopelessly lost. I say hopelessly lost.

Partial hardness of this kind is not discernible much. In fact, most of this kind of partial hardness is very, is not very discernible. And that's why it's so dangerous even trying to preach about it.

That's why it's so dangerous even trying to consider it. Because you'd be very remiss to say to Christians who stumble and fall or are out of fellowship with God, they are totally hardened against God, you might be dead wrong. Very dangerous and not very discernible.

There is a hardness in God's very own people. Sometimes and most times if they're true, they lament and complain about the hardness of their own soul. We have it expressed in the Bible, may I give you just a verse or two or one verse at least.

It expresses this principle at least of where the person themselves lament and complain about such a state that they're in. Isaiah chapter 63 verse 17, O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and harden our hearts from thy fear, return for thy servants' sake, and so on. We must note well that sometimes, some things that, some things that occur in this kind of hardness.

One of the things that occur in this kind of hardness is simply this. There is an unwillingness to receive divine impressions from the Word of God, whether it be read or preached or prayed. There is the unwillingness to receive divine impressions.

That is, here's a word, you know what it says, it's not a lack of, you don't know what it really says or what the preacher is saying. But refusing any divine impressions from that Word. That is, the heart is not soft.

That is, the heart is not humble. That is, the heart is not contrite. No submission to the divine warnings of Scripture.

No submission to the divine wooings of Scripture. No submission to the divine calls. No, no effect of the Word preached.

They sit like sticks or stones, unmoved, untouched. They do not experience the power of the Word, not the moaning influence of the Word as it's preached. Another thing that we should occur, that we should note well, another thing that occurs in this kind of hardness is this.

It surely comes under partial hardness, is the lack of an effect it has upon the guilt of sin. Now everyone that has a spark of divine grace in his soul has some sorrow for sin. He may not express it, but everyone that has a spark of divine grace has some sorrow for sin.

Another thing that occurs in this kind of hardness is this. In a time of partial hardness, is there's little concern for the sins of others. There should be a moaning for the sins of your children, of your neighbors, and of our land.

You see the great psalmist, how sometimes the sins of others, not in a censorious way that he wants to bring out all their sins and wave them before the people. That's not sorrow for the sins of others. Half of us complaining about the sins of the nation and the sins of your neighbors, that's not what I'm talking about.

What I'm talking about is not so much complained about publicly, but it's something that when you have a sorrow for the sins of others, you would kneel, or sit, or somehow cry out to God. You'll see it in Nehemiah, the sins of the nation, when he confessed his sin and identified his sins with all the people of God. Not that he was different, but he said, our sins, and he included himself.

And so, that's one of the things that occur in this kind of hardness. No concern or mourning over the sins of others. And the fourth thing that I suggest that occurs sometimes in this kind of hardness is this.

There's no sense of God's displeasure with sin. It doesn't seem to bother you that God is displeased with sin, your own sin and so forth. Now all this that I've mentioned, these four things, may be true of true believers.

We have some examples in the scriptures of this kind of hardness. Sometimes people feel perfectly secure and senseless in the time of great and actual sins. They feel perfectly comfort, comfortable, perfectly secure.

This can be bad or good. I think the best example of somebody who apparently was quite comfortable in his sins, was David. David, after his sin with Bathsheba, and after her murdering her husband.

Before, now before this is, before Nathan, the messenger of God, delivered God's message to him, he surely had some unpleasant thoughts about what he had done. But no indication as you study his past or his prayers, no indication that it seriously affected him. It wasn't seriously affected by sin.

It appears that there was no humiliation for this sin. There was great hardness. And let me say about this kind of hardness, when you can have security and be senseless in actual, actual sin, there's a great hardness of heart and all the difficulty to recover this one.

Be warned, my dear, tonight, if this is your case, be warned by David's example, that when men fall into such unspiritual condition, they are not removed. This condition will not be moved, removed by the ordinary means of grace. And certainly the preaching of the word is the ordinary means of grace.

But this condition will not be removed by the ordinary means as a rule. The means of healing and recovering said you once. I say beware when you or men go unaffected by the means of preaching.

If you are unaffected, if that's your case, and you're unaffected by the means of preaching, beware, you're on the brink of ruin. Live on, and you're living right now on sovereign grace alone. I believe it was so with David.

I have every reason to believe that he attended the ordinances all that time between, before Nathan came to him. I believe he attended the ordinance of divine worship, and it had no effect upon him. He lived impenitently in his sins until God was pleased to use, not ordinary means, but extraordinary means.

With David it was not ordinary means that recovered him. It was extraordinary means. And they were two principally.

One of them was a special message to him alone. Not in the general congregation, like I'm preaching tonight, where it falls at will. But he had a special message to him from one man, thou art the man.

That was the extraordinary means. But the other was the death of his child. Thus God will sometimes deal with churches and individuals in mercy.

That was merciful, because he was restoring his child. He had promised to do so for those who are truly his. If you want to see a great promise to this end, you read Isaiah 57, verses 16 to 19.

Though God may deliver them. God may deliver such men, but we should take heed. Because, and I'll tell you why.

God may do it by special, by special, unusual, extraordinary means of grace. But the reason we should take heed is this. Because I find no direct promise in the word of God that there will be an extraordinary deliverance.

These cases are reserved for his absolute sorrow. The end may be bitter and sorrow. Therefore in all seriousness I say take heed.

Oh all hardness of heart. I don't care what measure of hardness of heart you may be in tonight. Take heed.

Especially let us take heed. Because though I say God may deliver us and will deliver us if it's partial. He will do it by terrible things.

He'll do it by terrible things. Psalm 65, verse 5 it says, he will take vengeance on their inventions. We just looked at, we looked it up in the Hebrew, Pastor Chantry.

And that means on their doings. He will take vengeance on their doings. And in Psalm 80, in 99.8 it says this.

Thou answer'st them, O Lord our God. Thou hast said, Thou art a God that forgiveth them. Listen to this.

Thou forgiveth them, though thou tookest vengeance on their doings. Psalm 99.8 I fear, my dear people tonight, I fear in this case many professors exist today. Many professors exist today.

May I just mention another time when it is difficult to know whether hardness, in all these times it's difficult to know whether this hardness of heart that Jesus spoke so much about. To know whether it's permanent or total. Whether it's permanent and total or partial.

May I remind you of some of the words of our Savior, in connection with hardness of heart. This is no strange language to the lips of Jesus. Here our blessed Lord in the synagogue in Mark 3, 5. It says he looked around about them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their heart.

Quote Jesus. Mark chapter 6, verse 52. He walked on the sea and his disciples were troubled and sore amazed, though they had just seen him do many miracles.

Mainly feeding so many people. And yet they were amazed and troubled. Jesus said they considered not the miracle of the loaves.

And then he tells them why. For their hearts was hardened. May I give you another verbatim quote from Mark 8, 6, 17 and 18.

And when Jesus knew it he said to them, Why reason ye, because you have no bread? Perceive ye not yet? Neither understand? Have ye your hearts yet hardened? Having eyes, see not? Having ears, ye hear not? Do you not remember, said Jesus? Hard heart. The wise man said, Happy is the man that seareth always. But he that hardness his heart shall fall into mischief.

Some of you young people tonight, I fear that you've fallen into mischief, because you've hardened your heart. Some of you older people, I fear that you've fallen into mischief, because you've hardened your heart. And you can't hide it from the discerning saints to know that something is wrong.

Study the book of Hebrews. Study the book of Hebrews, and especially chapter 3 verses 7 to 15, and you find this language. Quote, Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart.

That's at least two or three times there. Harden not your heart. Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart.

I say, dear brother, dear sister in Christ, dear young people, could I repeat it for you? Today, if you hear his voice, not my voice, but if you hear his voice, harden not your heart. Since hardening the heart is the main reason for declining, since it's the main reason for backsliding, I don't think I'll take time to consider that passage. I had a couple pages on Matthew 3, 13 verses 14 and 15, but I think I'll pass it by.

Because I don't want to close on that note exactly. Though Bunyan warns you very much of Mr. Temporary, he warns you that. And it's because I believe if you study those things I read from Pilgrim's Progress, you won't say Bunyan, but you'll find each one of those things, they have their roots in the Bible.

God in righteous judgment gives blindness of the mind, and in righteous judgment he blinds eyes, and in righteous judgment he closes understanding. I say it's the worst judgment. I said it before, may I say it again? It's the worst judgment that can come upon man.

Some of you say, oftentimes when I'm talking to people, you know, we read these verses in the Bible, seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not. We read those things. But sometimes in our personal witness we'll have people say, oh, I don't understand.

How much effort and exercise have you given in trying to understand? They'll say, I don't see. You ask them the next question, how much have you tried to see? How much effort have you put in to try to understand? To try to see. Say, oh, I can't hear.

Well, where do you listen? But in all this, I want to say don't despair. Don't despair. I don't want to preach despairing messages.

These are warnings. You know, Bunyan has another character. I don't know if I have time to do this or not.

Did you ever hear one of Bunyan's characters? This is one you slip by. I wouldn't doubt you'd slip by this character. Do you know a character called Secret in Pilgrim's Progress? Oh, you missed that one, didn't you? Huh? Did you miss Secret? Well, Secret is the one who comes to somebody who has hardened their heart.

It happened to be a woman. It was Christiana. And she had hardened her heart and done a lot of things against her husband, tried to keep him back.

She did a lot of things, and she had hardened her heart against the truth as God time and again through her husband had put the truth of God in her path. She hardened her heart. But after he was dead, she was really bothered about this.

And she started to get interested in the way under certain convictions. And during one of these periods of conviction, she gets a guest. And I want to read to you.

And his name is Secret. Next morning when she was up, that is, Christiana. Next morning she was up, had prayed to God, and talked with her children a while.

One knocked at the door to whom she spake out saying, If thou comest in God's name, come in. So he said, Amen, and opened the door and saluted her with, Peace be to this house. The witch, when he had done, he said, Christiana, knowest thou whereof I am come? Do you know where I came from? Then she blushed and trembled.

Also her heart began to wax warm with desires to know whence he came and what was in his errand to her. So he said unto her, My name is Secret. Now do you know where Bunyan got that? Bunyan got that from Psalm 25, 14.

And the verse says this, The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he shall show them his covenant. My name is Secret. I dwell with those on high, if it is talked of where I dwell.

As if thou hast a desire to go thither. Also there is a report that thou art aware of the evil thou hast formerly done to thy husband. In hardening thy heart against his way, and keeping of these thy babes in their ignorance.

Christiana, the merciful one. He said to her, Christiana, Christiana, the merciful one has sent me to tell thee, this is what I want to tell you tonight. Will you hear tonight, if your hardened heart is hard? Would you hear tonight, I'm not Secret, but I can tell you what the merciful one said, and it's the same message.

What the merciful one said to Christiana, I can say to you tonight. Christiana, the merciful one has sent me to tell thee, that there is a God ready to forgive. Ready to forgive.

And that he taketh delight to multiply the pardon of offenses. He also would have thee know that he invited thee to come into his presence. Ah, there's a God that forgives sins.

And he invites thee to come into his presence. To his table, that he would feed thee with the fat of his house, and with the heritage of Jacob thy father. There is Christian thy husband, it was, with legions more his company's, there he is, ever beholding the face that doth minister life to beholders.

There he is, he's off there somewhere. They will all be glad when they shall hear the sound of thy foot over thy father's threshold. Christiana at this was greatly ashamed of herself.

And bowing her head to the ground, the visitor proceeded and said, Christiana, here is also a letter for thee. A letter for thee, which I have brought thee from thy husband's king. So she took it and opened it.

But it smelt after the manner of the bestest perfume. Read it in some Psalms 1-3. It smelt after the bestest perfume.

Also it was written in letters of gold. The contents of the letter was that the king would have her do as did Christian her husband. For that was the way to come to the city and to dwell in the presence with joy forever.

And at this the good woman was quite overcome. So she cried out to her visitor, Sir, will you carry me and my children with you that we also may go and worship the king? Oh honey, it's not quite that easy. Then said the visitor, Christiana, the bitter is before the sweet.

The bitter is before the sweet. Thou must through trouble, as did he that went before thee, enter the celestial city. The bitter before the sweet.

Wherefore I advise thee to do as did Christian thy husband. Go to the wicked gate yonder, over the plain, for that stands at the head of the way. So you see when we talk about judicial hardness, we don't know which is partial, which is total.

I hope you're not Mr. Temporary. I trust that you would take this section of God's word to your heart and go home and study the parable. Study that parable.

John Newton wrote a poem on it, and I'm finished. I don't think you can send the Holy Ghost home right at 8 o'clock every time. I strive for that, and I'm not making any excuses, but I don't believe you can turn the Holy Ghost off with a light.

Newton wrote a poem about this, maybe it's a song, I don't know, about the parable of the sower, and he said this, Ye sons of earth, prepare the plow, break up the fallow ground, the sower is gone forth to sow, and scatter blessings round. The seed that finds the stony soil shoots forth a hasty blade, but he'll repay the sower's toil, soon withered, scorched, and dead. The thorny ground is sure to bald, all hopes of harvest there, we find a tall and sickly stalk, but no, but not the fruitful ear.

The beaten path and highway side receive the trust in vain, the watchful birds the spoiled divine, and pick up all the grain. But where the Lord of grace and power, but where the Lord of grace and power, his blessed the happy field, his plenteous is the golden store, the deep wrought furrows yield. Father of mercy, we have need of thy preparing grace, let the same hand that gives the seed, provide the fruitful place.

And that's my prayer, that the hand that gives the seed, would provide the fruitful place. So be it. O God of all grace, bring home to our hearts those words of Jesus tonight, all the great, great truths embodied in this parable.

Forgive us of our stumbling, in our efforts even to communicate it to physical ears. How much more, Lord, do we confess our ignorance to be able to communicate it efficaciously to hearts. Hear our prayer, bless thy word to the glory of your name, and the good of your people.

Amen.

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