

Barren Ground

by John R. Rice

John R. Rice emphasizes the necessity of inner transformation and seeking the Lord to overcome the natural sinfulness of the human heart.

Duration: 37:18

Scripture: Hosea 10:12

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by encouraging the audience to bring people to God and get them saved. He then asks how many people in the audience are born-again Christians, emphasizing the importance of knowing one's salvation. The preacher shares a personal story about a man named Fred Hawkins who was convicted about his soul and began reading the Bible daily. Eventually, Fred experienced a transformation and asked God for a new heart. The sermon highlights the power of God to change lives and the need for personal surrender to Him.

Transcript

I have two texts tonight. One is in Hosea chapter 10 and verse 12, and the other is in Jeremiah. I'll turn to Jeremiah in a moment.

First in Hosea chapter 10 and verses 12 and 13. Sow to yourself and shed and cry and in the first place, did you notice here, the sinner's ground is naturally found. You don't have to plow and cultivate to get seed.

And you're going to have to make up your mind to plow up the morning growers of your life and weeds come natural to ground. You can't do it. How many men? I knew a young couple, girl loved up, out in the rough, wild West Texas country.

And here's a young man, all people laughed at him a little bit. He did drink, he did curse. I was washbuckling kind of an old ruck, West Texas, car hand and horse breaker and so on.

And so a young school teacher, oh, she thought maybe I could help him. He wanted to go somewhere, so she let him take her home from a party or two. And then after a while, she kept going with him, trying to help him.

She fell in love with him and married him. Oh, he promised her, if I had a good woman like you to love me and be good to me, I wouldn't drink anymore. And he intended it that way.

But he still had the field that naturally grew weeds. He still had the dirty bad heart where bad talk and the drinking and the cussing and the lewdness just come out naturally. He didn't have to work to bring that out.

In other words, there's no kind of work that'll keep ground unless you plow it, unless you dig it. There's no way to keep the weeds down. And God gave three lovely boys, lovely boys.

And then finally out one day at a drunken party, went out on the creek, him and some fellas to play poker and shoot dice and fish and drink. And they got some whiskey prescription liquor in Prohibition times and took some bootleg beer along and all and went out there and drank and drank. And he was suddenly seized with terrible sickness and intestinal paralysis.

They rushed him to the doctor. They took him to the hospital in West Stouffville and died on the operating table. I was out there when, I was out there at the funeral.

I was there, saw, I knew all the friends in that little community where I grew up in the cattle country of West Texas. I was there. Well, she nearly died with a broken heart.

Three boys left the race and drunken father's now dead. And I went out and she said to me, John, will you find some of the blankets out there they had out on the party? And will you find some of those mattresses and make some beds for some of the people? And so I went out there and in the garage, unrolled a mattress. My brother, Evangelist Joe Rice and I unrolled a mattress and had him fill some bottles of liquor and unrolled that.

And my brother and I took them out and broke them. And I feel very keenly that was my baby sister. Now let me tell you, I don't care all the good intentions.

And I do not doubt the good intentions of that man, nor his intention to live straight and clean up. Let me tell you, if you're going to clean up, you better clean up inside. It has to be fixed inside for it's outside.

As our brother said, and I'm off to run a study in here, of painting the pump don't make the water good. And just fixing up a little, fixing the outside don't make it any good. You know that? The trouble of the quasi-talkback, it just comes natural.

Let me tell you, your own little child, you can talk all you want to nice things, but your own little child, learns, he'll pick up, I won't do it. So then, the Lord says to the lost people, you better break up your ground. You better plow deep, and he says, you circumcise your hearts to the Lord.

You better plow deep and get things fixed up. What you better say is this, oh nature, God help me, he's going to lead me to hell if I don't get it fixed. If I don't have some miracle happen to fix me inside, I'm going to ruin.

He committed great crimes. Actually shot another woman and killed her. The other woman had led her husband on, and the husband infatuated with the other woman, and so she saw her downtown with her husband's car, she walked up and shot her.

I've talked to that woman. I've talked to a good many. Some in murderous row in jail.

I've talked to people in all these same things. Brother Sumner, I don't know what made me do it. I never thought I'd do a thing like this, huh? No, I know you didn't.

But that's inside you now, and you better break up the foul ground. There ought to be such a self-renunciation, I'm sick and tired of this old sin. I'm tired of this old heart.

I want things fixed up, and God will have to plow it. But you better have it plowed. And notice what he said here further.

He says, he said, you have a plowed wickedness. You're plowed wicked. Well, somebody said, Brother Ross, I'm going to try to do better.

But wait a minute. All the plowing you do on the old heart, all the cultivation you do on the old heart, it's going to grow more weeds. It's going to grow more weeds.

You know that? The other man, he's a petty thief. Now give him a college education. Now he'll be a confident man.

Dr. Bob Jones says, the fellow never learned to write. He couldn't write a check. He couldn't write a bad check.

He couldn't forge a deed. He couldn't write a lie. I know.

The more you cultivate the old wicked heart, now you say, well, I'll get a man a college education. Go ahead and make him a scientist. You'll make him an infidel.

Make him a dirty infidel. Oh, but we say we'll give him good religious instruction. You'll make him a dirty modernist and a Pharisee.

He'll go to hell, all the hotter place than hell. He'll trample on the blood of Jesus and spit on the Bible because he's got smart, you know. Let me tell you, all the cultivation and the education.

I've been interested in education. I'm a graduate of Decatur College, graduate of Baylor University, did graduate work in the University of Chicago and in the Southwestern Baptist Seminary. I taught in the Wayland College at Plainview.

I was for many years on the trustees' board of Northwestern Schools. I was for a time nominal vice president of the Tennessee Temple Schools. I'm on the board of Bob Jones University.

I've been keeping up with this education a bit as good while. We'll only reap the moral ruin until you don't fix the heart. This is a man with a bad heart getting saved.

He's got this moral argument. That's why I think it's God says. Oh, in Psalm 711, the Bible says that the plowing of the wicked is in.

Any kind of, you say, but I give to poor. Yes, I know. And teach people, if you do good like I'm, you can spit on Jesus.

The more you cultivate a wicked heart, I'm saying you're plowing. I had it already sold just to deliver and collect the money tomorrow. No, sir, poor.

It's time to sink. He's breaking up his mind. Don't say I'm unkind.

I'm like your mean business and like your want to live right. Oh, my. Well, all right.

So the Lord says here, it's time to seek the Lord. It's time to seek the Lord. Time to seek the Lord.

What do you mean? Well, first, I've said all right. I'm Lord. You just show me what's right.

What's wrong? I have a granddaughter, little Carol Joy. She's five years old. She's a blonde little beauty, and she's one of the prettiest children you ever saw.

And so Carol Joy. And when I see her, she and I have a little joke. I said, well, hello there.

How are you? I say, where have you been all my life? And she smiles and eats it up, you know. And I said, what's your telephone number? And so on with Carol Joy. And some time ago, and she's only five.

And one day, and her mother is the Miss Sandberg who writes from my kitchen window in the Sword of the Lord. And one day, her mother, somewhere she was aggrieved and offended her mother, so she wanted to hurt her mother's feelings. So she said to her mother, she said, I don't like you for a mama.

I'm going to get me another mama. And she went off to herself. After a while, she came back, and she was crying.

And she said, Mama, I don't like my sins. I don't like my sins. I don't want another mama.

And I don't be like that. She said, I don't like my sins. Well, her mother said, then would you like for us to pray and ask God to change you? You got that bad heart, haven't you? Would you like for us to pray and ask God to fix it? Yes, she would.

And she cried and so on. And so she trusted the Lord. Let me tell you, it'd be a mighty good thing if somebody came around and said, Lord, I don't like my old dirty sins.

God's sick and tired of you. You ought to get sick. You know? Some of you are like a dog going back to your vomits and they're worse saved, you know.

And that old rotten cow that you ate on out there like a wild dog does makes you sick. I hope some of you get so sick of your talk and your meanness, your wickedness. Inside, oh, you're nice and pious and slick outside.

God knows the wickedness of your heart. You're going to hell. You're on the devil's side.

All the lewdness, God knows it. All you would do if you'd get by with it, God knows it. All you will do is you get a little older and grow and get ripe in sin.

God knows it. I wish you'd get sick of your stomach over your sin. I remember Sergeant Simmons in Dallas, Sergeant on the police force, had an incurable drunken habit.

Oh, he just couldn't leave it alone. And while I prayed for him, while I prayed for him, others did. And one day, him home dropped his goodbyes, put him to bed and looked after him and all that.

And he prayed and said, Lord, I'm so sick of this dirty business. Oh, God, help me. And so he'd had such a bad case.

And so he'd always insist, you know, he said, the remedy, he said, is a little of the hair off the dog that bit you. He said, the way the soap rubs, take a little bit of drink. And so a regular routine about it.

And his wife started to bring him a little sip of the whiskey or so. And he said, get that stuff out of here and take that bottle and empty it. I don't want to ever see the stuff in my house again.

And he never did. And he was a member of our church in Dallas. Let me tell you, you ought to get sick and tired of sin.

Don't sow in among the thorns. Break up your pallet ground. It's time to seek the Lord and be circumcised in heart, the Lord says.

It's time to seek the Lord until it come and reign righteousness. Somebody said, well, I'm afraid I can't do better. I know it by yourself, but thank God Jesus can do better.

Jesus can do better. Yes, sir. You say, well, how can I be right? I'll tell you, God's going to have to make you right inside.

God's going to have to make you right. I was on, I went down to southern Missouri. A good man from Springfield, Missouri, my good friend, Fred Hawkins, owns a big mill there.

And he was a Baptist, one of these cussing, drinking Baptists until he was 47 years old. Never been converted. One man, wouldn't leave him alone.

One man just came, bought dairy food there from his mill. And a friend told me about it and said, I hated that. I didn't want to hurt his feelings.

He's such a good customer. He had a big herd of dairy cows. And this man would come and buy food, feed for his cows, enough for one day.

That's all. And on Saturday, enough for two days. And just there, because every day he'd bring along his Bible and talk with Fred Hawkins about his soul.

And he said, it gets him mad at him, but didn't want to lose his trade, so I had to listen to him. And he said, that went on three months. And he said, every day he'd bring a Bible except one day he forgot it.

So he went uptown and bought a Testament and said, after he got through with that, they gave it to him. He said, here it is. And he said, after he bought his Bible, three months.

And he said, that went on. And Fred got on such conviction. Remember, 47 years old, a drinking, cussing Baptist.

And so in his mail, he got up early and went down at 5 o'clock. And he said, he prayed to somebody to look in the window and see him. 5 o'clock in the morning.

So he went down to the basement in a room by himself in the big mill. He got down there and prayed and said, Lord, my friend keeps telling me you've got a new heart to give people. He said, Lord, I ain't promised you a thing.

I won't promise you. I quit cussing. I've tried and tried.

I've embarrassed my wife. I vowed and I didn't. I won't promise you.

I'll quit drinking. I can't promise you anything, Lord. I've tried.

He said, Lord, I ain't promised you anything. But my friend kept saying, you give people a new heart. Well, if you've got a new heart to give to me, Lord, I wish you would.

I'm so sick and tired of this old sinful heart. Well, so he got up off his knees and didn't know much how to deal, settle things, you know. And so he went on and a day or two while he dropped something and crushed his finger some way and went to the doctor and broke it and had to put it in splints and all that.

And going back to the doctor's office, he said to himself, well, what do you know? I didn't cuss. Well, come to think of it, it's been three days since I started to give me a new heart having cussed since then. Well, what do you know? He said, I believe it is.

And we rode along. That man's one of over 500 businessmen. He's a layman.

He's one of over 500 businessmen. I know some of me one. And we rode down through southern Missouri together and he said, I used to run this route bringing my truck first with my big four mule team hauling flour and feed and then truck and said, out on that tavern, I get drunk there lots of times, and down here another place, he said, we used to stop there for a beer always and on another place, ah, there was another old hangout we used to drink there and then he turned to me and shook voice and said, thank God, I don't need it.

I don't want it. Thank God, I'm done with it. Amen.

Let me tell you, the Lord has to do something for you if you're going to have a new crop. You got to have new ground. Get it broken up as God's blessed spirit can do it and be circumcised in heart and made into a new creature and God will help you so you can do right.

Aren't you tired of sin? Well, the Lord says, why don't you say, if you're tired of the load of your sin, let Jesus come into your heart. If you desire a new life to begin, let Jesus come into your heart. Thank God, he can fix what you can't fix.

But you're going to have to want it fixed. You're going to have to be sick of sin so that you can say, Jesus, I give up to you. I'm not trusting myself.

I can't do it, Jesus. But he's ready. He's ready then.

And then, so he said, it's time to seek the Lord. Seek the Lord? Yeah. Boy, I'll tell you what I'd be doing.

I'd be getting on my prayer bones. I'd be begging God to have mercy on a sinner. They give an invitation, I'd say, I'm going.

I'm coming down there. I'm going to get this thing fixed. That's what I'd do.

I'd go home, and if I didn't get fixed, I'd say, Brother Sumner, I want to, I'll talk to you. Don't misunderstand me. No trouble getting fixed.

But anybody seeks the Lord can find him. You, when you go into hell, you never stop the Lord. You never turn to face him.

You never ask him, draw nigh to God. He'll draw nigh to you. Anybody looks for God can find him.

Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. You get tired of saying, want mercy and forgiveness, you can have it. Thank God.

So do yourself in righteousness, grief and mercy. It's time to seek the Lord till it come and reign righteousness. He comes and like this shower, you begin to find some things you don't like and some things hurt your feelings and some things like Peter, when he's sinned, he said, Oh, Mark, oh, he went out and wept bitterly over his own sin.

You find you can't be content with sin anymore. Somebody said about Dr. H.C. Morrison, a great old Holiness Methodist preacher, and so somebody kind of poked fun because he was a Holiness preacher, you know, and somebody said to him one time, Dr. Morrison, have you got where you can't sin yet? He said, rather sadly, he said, no, no, but he said, I've got where I can't enjoy it. I have too, thank God.

I've got where I can't sin, but I've got where I sure do feel bad about it. I don't enjoy it. And you can put it down now.

The Lord, you seek him and he'll reign righteousness upon you. Ah, put it in your heart to want to do right and put it in your heart to enjoy the Lord and the Bible will be sweet. You'd rather be a Christian people and you want to do right.

God will help you. Don't you want to turn from your sin and break up your fallow ground and let God give you a new crop and reign righteousness upon you. Time to seek the Lord.

But I want you to notice, Brother Sumner, do you notice this? If people don't seek him, don't find him, nobody there. Anybody that doesn't want him doesn't get him. Anybody that isn't tired of sin doesn't quit it.

Anybody that doesn't start crying, you don't grow a Christian crop. Better make up your mind to it. What are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it? I wish I could first give an invitation to Christians.

I don't know whether I should or not. But I'll tell you now, you Christians, we'd better get around here. And you'd better have an established habit that just everybody around here claims to be a good Christian, better have a good checkup every so often and come down and just say, I've been checking up and I've been falling short on this or that and the other.

You say, well, I'd be embarrassed. Then you'd better get embarrassed of why I learned to be a soul winner. If you don't get to where you're sick and tired of this hum-flum, dead level, never plow any ground, never plant anything, never reap anything, we're just nice and pious and dead.

I say that kind must disgust God. We ought to have somebody saying, I want to be a better Christian. Ought to be somebody come down here and say, you people pray for me, I've loved and sons saved, it must be my fault.

The fellow ought to be able to win his family. Don't you think so? Yeah? All right. It's time to seek the Lord.

Anybody go up there and say, first of all, how many have loved and sons saved? Don't you think it's a good thing to go to sowing and go to planting and plowing deep and then planting and broken heart and tears and then sow the seed. Oh God, give a crop of repentance. I wonder how many have loved and sons saved.

Let's see your hands. Loved and sons saved. All right.

All right. Now what are you going to do about it? Sow to yourselves in righteousness and reap in mercy. You can have the mercy if you sow in righteousness, you know.

That's the reason the Bible said, in denunciation we shall reap if we think not. All right. Always abiding in the work of the Lord for as much as you know your labor is not in vain in the work of the Lord.

Let's go after them these four days. Oh God, help us. Let's bring them in and get them saved.

Will you do that? Now let me ask you a question. How many say, I'm a born again Christian, maybe not a good one as ought to be, but thank God I'm saved. I'm not as good as I ought to be either.

I'm very poor. But how many say, thank God I'm saved. Let's see your hands.

Born again Christian. You know that, boys up here? Thank you, son. Do you know you're a Christian? If you don't know it by then you better be settling it now.

If you don't know it, anybody with just a minute, just a moment, let's hear you. Born again Christian. Thank you.

Now hands down. Now let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, when you come, blessed Holy Spirit, and start to plow and turn up the clouds and to cut into the roots of sin and pull up the stumps of sin, the briars spreading everywhere.

First of all, Lord, oh, we'd love to see a breaking up among the people of God, tears, confession, new vows, and going after sinners. And then we'll pray, oh, God, deal in mercy with sinners and let there be a plowing and a breaking up and a pulling of stumps and seeking the Lord in righteousness. Lord, help us.

With our heads bowed, I want to come and say, Brother Rice, I'm not saved and I want to be saved. Will you lift your hand? We'll ask God to save you tonight. We'll ask God to help you right now to turn to Him and trust Him.

And He will if you mean it. Will you say, pray for me, I want to be saved. Lift your hand just a moment.

Lift your hand just a moment. One like that. Lift your hand just a moment.

Yes, God bless you. God bless the lady and help her tonight. Lord, sure, I trust you.

What about it, boy? Sign up here. You're not saved? You want to be, don't you? Don't you want to be saved? I want you tonight. God wants you to.

May I pray for God to save you tonight? May I pray for God to save you tonight? Don't you want that? You need that, son. Don't wait to get to that man, all of man's temptations and troubles. May we pray God to save you tonight? God bless you.

Who'll say pray for me? Let's see. Lift your hand. Anybody else wants to be saved? Anybody else tired of sin? You want God to fix your heart? Maybe like that little blonde granddaughter of mine, you say, I don't like my sins.

Maybe it's I'm tired of them. I want to do right. Will you ask God to forgive me, clean me up, and make me a new heart? Anybody else? Anybody lift your hand? Anybody else? Anybody else? Now, dear Lord, come in saving power and mercy tonight.

Amen.

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