

The Evidence of Genuine Conversion

by Jono Sims

The only evidence of genuine conversion is fruit, which is the result of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.

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Scripture: Matthew 7:17

Topics: "Genuine Conversion", "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses his youth group and emphasizes the importance of genuine conversion and salvation. He warns against the temptation to live a double life and barter with God, stressing that true salvation is not based on our own efforts but on God's grace. The speaker explains that genuine conversion is characterized by a love for God and obedience to Him, as well as God's continuous work in separating us from sin and conforming us to the image of Christ. He emphasizes that when we do sin, God disciplines and corrects us, which is a sign that we are His children.

Transcript

2 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians chapter 13, I just want to read one verse tonight, verse number 5. 2 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 5, if you're there, would you say amen? Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith. Prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates.

May the Holy Spirit of God give you ears to hear the Word of God. Examine, peradzo, to test or to scrutinize. It literally means, as you place your soul under the test of genuine conversion, you really should scrutinize yourself.

Do you pass or fail? And these words only grow in intensity. Docky Modso, prove your own selves, carries the idea of passing metal through the fire to determine its makeup and its quality. Our God is a consuming fire.

And as you pass your own selves through the fiery test of God's Word, what is the metal? Does it survive or is it consumed? Paul said, examine your own selves, prove yourselves. And then he said, know your own selves. Epignosco, not just a general knowledge, but a detailed knowledge.

Strong says it means to know by some distinguishing mark. Are there any marks that betray you as a child of God? What marks reveal that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates? This word reprobate is

the opposite of the word prove. In the Greek, docky modso, it means a metal passes the test.

In our English language, we would put the prefix you in on to make it a negative. Same idea in the Greek. That word reprobate is not docky modso, it's a docky modso, unapproved.

In other words, it means something does not pass the test. What the apostle is saying is this. When you apply the true biblical criteria of salvation to your life, you fail the test.

And beloved of God, this is one test you had better not fail. And but I'm convinced as a pastor that so many will. Right here in this room.

The apostle Paul says, examine not your neighbor. Listen to these personal pronouns here. Your own selves.

Prove your own self. Know your own selves. The point of the text is that you don't need to be concerned with anyone here tonight, but your own self.

This is a test that must be by the Holy Spirit of God and the written word of God personally applied to every individual in this room tonight. I pray God will allow us to focus on no one but our own selves. Let me quote a few verses of scripture as we begin tonight.

The Lord Jesus said, even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Now listen to this. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.

Isn't the Lord so simple? Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Listen now.

Whereby, by their fruits, you shall know them. That's the Lord Jesus. The apostle James said it.

Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone. The apostle Paul, we can all quote the first part. For by grace are you saved through faith, and that's not of yourselves.

It's the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. But listen to this. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

These verses, and many others just like them, reveal that you and I are saved by God's grace through faith alone, apart from good works. But these verses equally teach that everyone who is genuinely converted will bear fruits of righteousness, and this is how we know we're saved. The Bible says in 1 John, in this the children of God are manifest, or made known, and the children of the devil.

Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. The Lord said it this way, I'm the vine, you're the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.

For without me you can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered. And men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

I just concluded recently, three years and about eight months in the book of Romans, when I finished, I asked God to forgive me for treating it so lightly. And that's not a joke. I should have spent much more time in it.

When I finished Romans chapter 2, and I don't have time to go into that tonight, and specifically verses 6-10, this is the conclusion that I came to. If you're listening, would you say amen? Don't trust works to save your soul, but don't trust that your soul is saved without them. Amen? Don't trust works to save your soul, but don't trust that your soul is saved without them.

Now, let me rephrase it. After 18 years, which is not long, but after 18 years of preaching verse by verse and book by book, through books of the Bible, here is the conclusion that I've come to based upon my study of Scripture. Listen to my words.

The only, underscore the word only, the only evidence of genuine conversion is fruit. Did you hear me? The only evidence of genuine conversion is fruit. In other words, the way to know for sure that you're saved is to study the Bible, find out what it describes as the fruit of conversion, then examine your own self, prove your own self, know your own self, or you may be a reprobate.

That's what the Bible says. Now, I only have two main points tonight. Very simple.

As we consider the evidences of genuine conversion, number one, things that are not fruit of genuine conversion, but it almost seems as if they're universally accepted as evidence. Let me restate that. First of all, I want to point to some things very quickly, and I don't want to spend the bulk of my time here, but it must be done.

I want to look at some things that are not evidence of genuine conversion, but everybody thinks they are. And then secondly, and more importantly, what are fruits? Some, not all, I won't be able to be exhaustive. What are some fruits of genuine conversion? Let's begin on the not side.

I want to point out some things tonight that are not evidence of genuine conversion, but everybody thinks that they are. And again, this list is certainly not exhaustive, but in my ministry, it seems that this is where so many people land. And what I want to say to you tonight is this.

If these are the things, the only things you are trusting in as proof of your salvation, then you have been deceived. And you're guilty of what the Apostle says. You are reprobate, ad hocimos.

You failed the test. You are not approved before the Lord. Some of these are perhaps going to be a shock to some of you.

Good. Much rather have you be shocked before John O'Seams, who has no power at all, than shocked before the presence of him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. What are some things that are not evidence of genuine conversion, but to hear people speak, you would think that they are? Number one on the list, a profession of faith.

Number one on the list. A profession of faith is not an evidence in and of itself of genuine conversion. Help me out.

Jesus said, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall inherit the kingdom of God, but he that doeth the will of my father, which is in heaven. Matthew 7:21. In the context of false prophets, i.e. false professions, people who would emphatically say, Lord, Lord, verily, verily, truly, truly.

I mean, these are people who would boldly declare, I know the Lord. I'm saved. Truly, truly, I tell you, I am a Christian.

Lord, Lord. Man, we throw the term Lord around down here in the South, it doesn't mean a thing. While these people were boldly professing their faith in Jesus Christ, he had a profession too.

Problem is, his is the only one that counts. They professed, Lord, Lord, and Jesus said, I never knew you. Only the Lord's profession counts.

They professed, they knew him, but the Bible reveals the Lord said, I never knew you. Paul wrote to Titus and he warned of these people in our churches. He said they professed that they know God, but in works they deny him being an abominable, disobedient, and to every good work, here's that word again, reprobate, ad hocimos.

They fail the test, sadly, tragically. In Southern Baptist life, we have equated the profession of faith as the evidence of conversion. Have you made your profession? Have you made your profession? We're seeing the evidence of it too.

16.2 million members the last time I checked, only 5 million went to church this Sunday. In other words, about 75% of our folks don't even go to church. I was preaching a series on divorce.

That'll pack your church out. Let me tell you why. Because we Baptists lead the charge.

The Religious and Ethics Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention and their magazine printed these statistics. Now, I'm going to confess to you that this was in the 2000 issue, and this is 2007, so it's probably worse now. The divorce rate among Baptists is higher than the entire world surrounding us.

In America, the divorce rate is 25%. This must be first-time divorce rate. Among Christians, it's 27%.

Among Baptists, it's 29%. Can we not safely conclude that a profession of faith in and of itself is not an evidence of genuine conversion? Neither is, I went forward in an invitation, I prayed a sinner's prayer, or I know the date, the time, and the place. These are all sacramentalism.

They have no power at all to save. Evidence of genuine conversion is not what you say with your mouth. This people draweth near to me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

Jesus Christ is not impressed with what you say because he can see the state of your heart. No, a profession, if that's all you have, is not a place to anchor your soul. Number two, now you listen all the way.

Don't you go out of here tonight and misquote me. Neither is assurance. Now, I believe in eternal security.

I believe that God knew us in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world and chose us to be saved, and therefore nothing can ever separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ, and that's where we get that doctrine from in Romans chapter 8. That's not what I'm talking about. When I say assurance is not an evidence of genuine conversion, I'm talking about those folks who live the life of sin and who have habitual patterns of sin in their life, and you can ask them, Sir, are you safe? And they'll look you in the face and they'll say without a moment's hesitation, I have no doubt, I'm absolutely sure, I know I am safe. Assurance.

They're assured. They are confident. They are bold that they know the Lord.

That was the group Jesus was preaching to in Matthew chapter 7. Church people. People that were sure that they were saved. As a matter of fact, when Jesus said to them, I never knew you, in Matthew 7, 28, the Bible says they were astonished.

It was a bombshell. They were absolutely shocked. You know what I think people are really saying? Sir, are you saved? Do you know for sure you're saved? I think what they may be saying is, yeah, I went forward.

Sure, I prayed that prayer the preacher told me. I did exactly what the preacher told me to do. Why, I was even baptized.

They're confident. They're sure. They are assured that they have a home in heaven.

Jesus said, and I'll talk about this in a moment, they were workers of iniquity. It is a false assurance. No, a profession of faith in and of itself is no evidence of genuine conversion.

Just assurance. Hey, I know I'm saved. That in and of itself is not evidence of genuine conversion.

Number three, neither is an emotional feeling. Thou believest there is one God. The young lady that was baptized this morning quoted that.

Thank you, sister. Thou believest there is one God. Thou doest well.

The devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead. You know, demons have a better theology than most Baptists.

I mean, they have a good theology of Christology. They have a good theology of the deity of Jesus Christ. They know about the person and the work of God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

And the Bible says when they think on these things, they even tremble. They're Quakers. Only problem is, it's a dead faith.

Because in the demonic realm, what they believe and tremble at produces no obedience to lordship. You wouldn't believe some things people say to a preacher. I know y'all think Brother Jeff is exaggerating.

Brother, if you preach about genuine conversion every Sunday until you die, you will not be imbalanced. Here's what I've had people tell me before. Man, when I got saved, I had an awesome feeling.

I had a girl tell me one time. I asked her if she was saved. She said, yes.

I said, how do you know? She said, well, that day the air was cleaner, the sky was bluer, the sun was brighter, and the birds sang prettier. I'm not kidding. There are people that are going to step out into eternity based on the temperature, the cloud coverage, the wind direction, and songbirds.

It may sound ridiculous, but that's what people do. Let me tell you something that the demons wouldn't want me to tell you tonight. You can hear the word of God.

You can tremble when you hear it. You can cry. You can have goose bumps and die in your sins and go straight to hell.

Because faith without works is dead, and that kind of faith will not save your soul. And emotional feelings is not an evidence of genuine conversion. Number four, neither is church membership and baptism.

It's church folks Jesus is preaching to. People that have been baptized. People who have, if you will, joined a church still lost in their sin.

Church membership is not an evidence of salvation. Neither is baptism. And while I'm on that subject, let me just say this.

Baptism has never conveyed the grace of God to one soul. Did you hear me? Grace does not come through the rite of baptism. Baptism, 1 Peter 3, 21, cannot put away the filth of the flesh.

But it is an answer of a good conscience towards God. There are multiplied millions of people who believe they will enter into heaven simply because they've joined a church or been baptized. One of my best friends who still, to the best of my knowledge, lives in the Florence area.

Went to elementary school with me and a very dear friend. And I remember it like it was yesterday. I could have only been in the fourth or the fifth grade.

And he came to school and he was all excited. And he told me, and I didn't know a whole lot then, but I knew enough to know this wasn't right. And he told me, he said, man, I'm going to be baptized Sunday.

I said, you are? Had you been saved? He said, no, mom and dad told me it was time to be baptized, so I'm going to be baptized. And did you know that unless something has changed in that young man, now older man's life, he is going to step out into eternity and face a holy God without the blood of Jesus only because his mom and his dad said it's time for you to be baptized. That is not an evidence of conversion.

Neither is number five, religious activity. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name and in your name cast out devils and in your name done many wonderful works? What a self-incriminating indictment. When called in the presence of Jehovah God, they argue their works as the basis of their conversion.

It's proof that they never knew the Lord. A genuinely converted child would never argue works before the throne of God. He would offer up only the blood of Jesus.

You know, some people confuse religious activity with fruit. I read a quote in C.I. Schofield's Bible years ago. He said religious fruit may be mimicked, but never duplicated because fruit can only be produced by the converting work of the Holy Spirit of God.

Do not make the mistake of confusing religious activity with spirit produced fruit. And so many people do that. They think, well, I'll just get busier and I'll just do more and I'll just sign up and I'll just go on that mission trip and I'll just give a little bit more than a tithe.

It's almost like a Catholic indulgence for heaven's sakes. God, I'll tithe, you overlook my foul mouth. God, I'll go to church, you overlook my drunkenness.

Lord, I'll sing in the choir, you just overlook my extramarital affair. Paul said, do you not understand that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. No fornicator, no idolater, no adulterer, no effeminate, which means homosexual, will inherit the kingdom of God.

No thief, no covetous, no drunkard, no reviler, no extortioner will inherit the kingdom of God. There will be a lot of former fornicators and there will be a lot of former idolaters and there will be a whole bunch of former homosexuals and prostitutes and crack addicts and everything else, but there won't be any present ones because the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all unrighteousness. Religious activity is not an evidence of genuine conversion.

Some of the most godless, wicked, immoral people I know attend church religiously. They're deacons, they're choir members, but they're not converted. I'm not bitter about it.

Pastor, you just learn to live with it. If you don't, you're not going to be around very long. Folks in Shelbyville don't give me any trouble.

I've never had the city council call me in and say, you're in trouble. It's some doggone church, folks. That's where I have my trouble.

People who say with their mouth, I love God, but in words, they deny the Lord. Deny the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, I asked the Lord about that.

It was always a little bit confusing to me because Jesus said, not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. These people were doing, weren't they? I mean, they were preaching, weren't they? They were casting out devils, weren't they? Their own statement was they were doing many wonderful works. Yeah, by their estimation, but by God's, they were workers of iniquity.

You know what that means? I believe they were living a double life. While they were preaching, they were living immoral. While they were casting out devils, they were living a double life.

While they were doing their own professed many wonderful works, they were hypocrites. Living a double life. Listen to me now.

Listen to me. You can fool Jeff Mobleton. You can fool John O'Simm.

And you can fool the elders of this church, even with all the safeguards they have, but you will never fool the Son of God. What chance do you think you have of duping an infinite, all-knowing, all-wise, holy God? This is one test you had better not fail. I want to spend the rest of my time on the yes side of the equation.

Brother, what are some evidences of genuine conversion? Please, drink deep of this well. Our youth had a Disciple Now weekend this past weekend. They had a fifth quarter after the ball game.

They all met up at the church, and we encouraged them to bring their friends. Brother Charles went on my computer and got this manuscript. I had this sermon given to me when I was going through the book of Romans, and he went in and downloaded it, and this was their text for the Disciple Now.

The evidence of genuine conversion. How can I know for sure that I've experienced what it means to be born again? Wrought of God. Number one on the list.

Are you folks listening? Would you wave at me? Number one on the list. Genuine love for God. That's number one.

How do we know that we've passed from death unto life? Paul said in Romans chapter 5, we know that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes us not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us. Love for God is not something you work up. Love for God is not something you turn up.

Love for God is supernaturally imparted by the Holy Spirit at conversion. I mean, when you get saved, you fall in love with God. And by the way, Jesus Christ is God.

So you love Him. You love the Father. And you love the Holy Spirit.

Say, Brother John, oh, is that just an affinity toward God? Is that an emotional feeling? Yes, but it's so much more than that. This is the love of God. That we keep His, and they're not grievous.

This is how we know that we know Him. If we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, but He does not keep His commandments, is a liar.

And the truth is not in Him. Whoever keeps His word in Him, the love of God is perfected. And this is how we know we're in Him.

He that saith He is in Him, ought to walk even as He walked. 1 John 2, 3-6 Listen to me. Genuine love for God always produces obedience to God.

Do you hear me? You go into these folks' home, and they've got a copy of the Bible. And I'm not trying to be disrespectful, but they've got a copy of the Bible sitting there on their coffee table that could choke Godzilla. You know the one I'm talking about got the praying hands and Jesus looking up into heaven? And the thing's got a quarter inch of dust on it.

And brother, I'll tell you, if you moved that Bible five inches, they'd whack your head off. But they hadn't opened it up and read it in years. I'll tell you right now, all they've got is a form of godliness without the power.

It's not just some kind of southern flag-waving pride in a leather-covered book. Man, listen, it is obedience to the Word of God. That's how we know that we love God.

And I'll tell you this, when you obey God, when you love God, when you follow obediently as a disciple, you get the feelings too. I mean, you get the affinity. You get the affection.

I was in here today, and I was on the front pew as brother Tom was leading us. And I promise you, I was saying, Oh God, help me. Oh God, help me.

I was so emotional. I didn't think I was going to be able to preach. I was weeping and I was crying.

And I'm not really a weeper. And my heart was just overcome with a sense of the love of God. Loving God is great.

And that's one way that we know that we've passed from death unto life. Number two, we know that we've been genuinely converted because the Holy Spirit of God is continually separating us from sin. Did you hear me? No, that's not the doctrine of sinless perfection, the false doctrine I might add.

It's the doctrine of sanctification. That God separates us from the world to live a holy lifestyle for Him. Listen to me now.

Every person whom God saves, He sanctifies. If you're not being sanctified, you've never been justified and you haven't got a half a hallelujah's chance of being glorified. I'm confident of this.

He who began a good work in you, regeneration and justification, will be faithful to perform it, sanctification. Until the day of Christ Jesus, glorification. In other words, if you're expecting that, you had better be experiencing this, which is based upon that.

Regeneration and justification always leads to sanctification. And sanctification always leads to glorification. And nothing can abort the process.

Because God chose that we would experience it before the world began. You know what's interesting to me? If you read Romans chapter 8, and I understand that sanctification is not mentioned, but brother, it's overwhelmingly applied. When Paul in Romans chapter 8 says that everyone whom God foreknew, He predestined.

Everyone whom He predestined, He called. Everyone whom He called, He justified. And everyone He justified, He also glorified.

When I was in school, that's past tense. Still is. 2 plus 2 is 4, and glorified is still past tense.

You know, from God's perspective, I'm already glorified. You all see the glory shining off my bald head. That's not glory, that's lights.

But praise God, I'm headed for glory. Amen? And I'm telling you right now, beloved of God, everyone whom God justifies, He also sanctifies. And all whom He sanctifies, He also glorifies.

And since God chose that before the foundation of the world, nothing in time can abort the process. And my glorification is mentioned in the past tense. Because from God's perspective in eternity, it's already happened.

Because there is no time in heaven, God's not bound by time. God is not on a schedule. When God saved me, He justified me, He sanctified me, and He glorified me.

I'm just kind of along for the ride. It's working itself out now in my life. I know I'm saved because God is continually separating me from sin.

You know, before I got saved, I could sin and enjoy it. Can I honestly tell you tonight that I do still sin? But I'll tell you right now, there's not an ounce of joy in it. Oh, it grieves my heart.

It's such a heavy burden. And I am more disappointed now than I ever have been before when I grieved the Spirit of my blessed Savior. I hate sin.

Do you? I still succumb to it, but I'm telling you right now that I absolutely hate it. Listen to this. For whom He did foreknow, He did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.

That's sanctification. Ephesians 1 says, He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy. That's sanctification.

Did you know that sanctification is as much the predestined will of God as regeneration? Just as much. You don't get to pick what of this you want. I think I'll take a little regeneration, and I want to go to glory land, but I'm not too interested in living a holy life.

Then you don't have the Jesus of the Bible. You've got a God of your own making, and it's not going to get you there. See, that's what we're talking about is false conversion.

When you've genuinely been converted, the Holy Spirit of God has taken you on as His lifetime project of conforming you into the image of Jesus Christ. Brother Paul Washer, nobody has stated this more clearly than he has about the narrow gate and the narrow path and the broad way and the wide path. We badgers think that we can enter in through the narrow path and walk the broad road.

It's a lie. Listen to me. I just had vocal cord surgery just a few months ago, and I couldn't talk for a week.

Not a word. And after that, it was like three weeks. He told me, speak in a conversational tone.

I don't have a conversational tone when I'm asleep. It was murder. But you know, during that time, I read Bunyan's Pilgrim Progress, and if you've never read it, shame on you.

Get it and read it. That book was such an encouragement to me, and I'm telling you right now, you need to get that book and you need to read it. Listen to me now.

One thing Bunyan brings out in Pilgrim's Progress is this. It doesn't matter what you say, and it doesn't matter what you've experienced. If you're on the broad path, it only leads to one place, and that's destruction.

It's the narrow path that leads to the celestial city. That's the path you'd better be on. Number three.

Evidence of genuine conversion is a genuine Holy Spirit love for God. God's continual separation from sin. And number three, and tell me if this doesn't go along with the former one.

Discipline when we do sin. Listen to this. For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as sons. For what son is it whom the Father does not chasten? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all of us are partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Hebrews 12, 6-8.

Let me review and then we'll move on. Genuine conversion looks like this. At conversion, God places a love in my heart for Him, and we love Him.

And that love is manifested in obedience to Him. And our conversion is manifested in that God is working on us to separate us from sin and to conform us into the image of Christ. Regretfully and sadly, we do still sin because we give in to the flesh or the devil or the world.

But when we sin, brother, God disciplines us, God corrects us, and the Bible says He even scourges us, which means He whips us back into the way. Listen to me. If you can sin and not fall under the discipline of God, you are not His child.

It's the mark of a father to discipline his child. I've heard people, always makes me nervous, stand up in a worship service when it's testimony time. You ever been in testimony time? That's the most nervous time for a pastor.

Usually you get a goofball. I've heard people stand up and say something like this. Yeah, I got saved when I was two years old.

I know I'm exaggerating a little bit. They'll say, yeah, I got saved when I was nine years old. Now, for the next 40 years, I live like hell.

But praise God, I came back last month. No way, Jose. No way.

Read 1 John 3. Listen, if you are abiding in a habitual pattern of sin, it is proof positive that you have never been converted. Go ahead and jump through those mental hoops you've set up. I did it for 25 years, Pam.

You know, for 25 years, I tried to convince God I was saved. For 25 years, I tried to tell God why I was a Christian. You know I never did convince Him.

He kept convincing me that I was lost. I'd stand up in front of my youth group where I was the youth director. First Baptist Church, Sooner Star.

And I'd tell my youth group, man, you can be saved and know it in the Spirit of God. They'd say, you sure can. Problem is, you don't, do you? We do this game in our minds.

We think we can barter with God like I talked about this morning. You know, live this double life and somehow hope in the end that it leads to life. Friend, it is a lie.

We love God. God continually separates us from sin. When we do sin, and we do, God disciplines us to correct us and bring us into the way.

And listen to the fourth evidence. These all go together. It's like a jigsaw puzzle.

We love God. God separates us from sin. We do sin.

We sin. God disciplines and corrects us to bring us back into the way. And listen, when the Lord God Almighty pulls out His disciplined rod and applies it to His daughter, applies it to His Son, here's how we know we're saved.

We agree with Him. Quickly. Quickly.

Quickly. Repentance is the doctrine. Whosoever covers his sin will not prosper.

Whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them will have mercy. When a child of God sins, the Holy Spirit of God will move in with conviction and up the ante as much as He needs to to get your attention. And the child of God, because the Holy Spirit of God lives inside of that child, will have a heartfelt brokenness, a genuine repentance.

Brother Jeff, I've seen all kinds of definitions of repentance. I was reading Spurgeon's commentary on Psalm 139 years ago. And he quoted a man I'd never even heard of before.

And here was this brother's definition of repentance. Are you listening to me? Repentance is me taking sides with God against me. Repentance is when I take sides with God against myself.

When I sin and the Holy Spirit of God comes and puts His finger on that sin and He will not remove it and He is insistent that I deal with that sin and He will not change His verdict and it will not go away, the breaking point comes when I say, God, You're right. I am so sorry. Lord, You are right.

I am wrong. You are completely just and I am wicked. God, You are righteous and I am unholy.

Oh, Father, would You please forgive me? I am so sorry. Lord, help me not repeat that again. I truly want deliverance from that.

God, You are right. Have mercy on me. Genuine repentance is a heartfelt forsaking of sin.

It's taking sides with God against ourselves. Paul warns us of false repentance. He said the world has worldly sorrow which worketh death, but godly sorrow leads to life.

He said it this way, godly sorrow leads us to repentance, the King James Version says, not to be repented of. Are you listening to me? If you repented of your repentance, you never repented. If you changed your mind about changing your mind, you didn't ever change your mind.

Are you with me? That's just worldly sorrow. That's just mushy sentimentalism. Man, when we genuinely repent, beloved of God, it marks a change.

There's a change of direction. There's a change of attitude. There's a change of course.

Metanoia, meta-change, noose the mind. We think differently about sin, about self, about God, about others, about whatever the offense in this thing was. We know we're children of God because we love the Lord and it's our desire not to sin.

Often times we do and when we do, God loves us enough as a child to discipline us and when God disciplines us, hopefully because we have cultivated with God a tender, submissive heart to truth. When God touches us on the shoulder or whispers in our ear, we ought to melt before the Lord like butter. I'd much rather the Lord touch me on the shoulder and it break my heart than Him have to break my back.

Hadn't you? Genuine repentance. Let me just give you two more and I'm done. Genuine love for God.

Continual separation from sin. Discipline from God when we do sin, which produces and leads to genuine repentance. Another way that we know we're saved is that we truly desire to live our lives for God's glory.

Romans 2, 6 and 7 says that God will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality and eternal life. That phrase, patient continuance, is the doctrine of perseverance of the saints.

We who are saved continually persevere for the glory of God. And man, your pastor does such a great job of focusing you on the glory of God and helping you to see that this church exists to glorify God. But if I could just give you the simplistic layman's definition.

Living your life for the glory of God. The evidence of genuine conversion as manifested in living our lives for the glory of God is when we live to please God and not self. God, if this pleases you, I'm ready, I'm

willing.

God, if this thing does not please you, then I can live without it because your glory is more important than me getting my way. Another mark of genuine conversion is spiritual maturity, which goes along with perseverance. 2 Peter 3, 18 says grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Is there anything wrong with this picture? This bothers me. I've been a Southern Baptist my whole life. As far back as I can trace my heritage, it's Southern Baptist.

People come up to me all the time and say, man, why do you pick on Southern Baptists? Because I am one. God didn't call me to preach to the Methodists now. And the thing that bothers me is that I see people even at Shelbyville Mills Baptist Church, a bunch of them, who will look you in the eye and get that little twinkle, you know.

Talk about the good old days. Yeah, boy, now that God came down. Boy, 30 years ago, I got saved.

Will you allow me to share my killing roots with you? And I hadn't grown a lick. What is wrong with that? Now, I hope you won't take this disrespectfully. I'm not being funny.

I'm not being loose here. And if this has touched your family, you just know I'm trying to use this as an illustration. But when a baby is born and that child doesn't have an appetite, or his eyes don't develop properly, or his brain doesn't develop properly, or his limbs don't develop properly, we say that that child is retarded.

His growth is retarded in some area. Yet, we've got folks in our church that live their lives for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 years, and accept as normal that they have been justified, and praise God, eternal security, I'm going to heaven when I die. But they have never experienced any of the sanctifying grace of God.

Growth is an evidence of genuine conversion. Ephesians 6 says we ought to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Paul said to the church at Ephesus that they should be rooted and grounded in Christ.

I'll tell you one way the Lord does that. He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastor-teachers for the perfecting of the saints, to do the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God. Listen, unto a perfect man, or a mature man, unto the measure and the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we be henceforth no more children tossed to and fro, and blown about by every wind of doctrine by the slight and cunning craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

But speaking the truth in love may grow up in all things, Him who is the head, even Christ. Spiritual maturity is a mark of genuine conversion. Obviously, the lack of these things is a mark of a false profession.

And I'm not even going to enlarge. The fruit of the Spirit is love, top of the list. Joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

Against such things there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Galatians 5, 22 through 25. Examine your neighbor, your own self. Proof.

Your neighbor? No. Your own selves. Know your own selves.

You should scrutinize. You should pass through the fire of the Word of God. You should know intimately the state of your soul.

You should look for those distinguishing marks. Are they there? You're a tree. You're either producing good fruit, which reveals you're a good tree.

Or you're producing corrupt fruit, which reveals that you are a corrupt tree. And it is that simple. But you know what's fixing to happen? Folks are going to walk out of this room and think, I'm alright.

I'm alright. Man, I remember when I went forward, I remember. This message that I preach tonight is sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

I won't go into any more detail than I'm about to say out of respect and reverence. Not only is this message that I just preached to you tonight sealed by the blood of Jesus, but it's sealed by the blood of my own family. Is that the truth? I have stood in front of the casket of family members who had a great part in my raising.

And I love them. And they are precious to me. And they are dear to me.

And they mean the world to me. But there was no evidence of conversion in their lives. And I looked them in the face as respectfully and humbly as I could before they died.

I told them I stand in my pulpit every week and tell people just like you, you are lost. And you are going to perish. So if I would do that for my own family, I must do that for you.

I beg you. And this is not going to be some whoop it up emotional jump through the hoop. We've had that.

We've done that too much. It takes some time. You're going to have to open up the Bible.

You're going to have to be a Berean. Search the Scriptures to see if what I've told you is so. Look at what the Bible says genuine conversion looks like.

Go and look at people in the Bible who were converted and then the way they lived their lives. And turn that mirror of the Word of God, that perfect law of liberty on your... Aim that barrel at yourself. And allow God to pull the trigger.

I don't know how tense it is in this room tonight. I have no way of knowing. One of the most frustrating things about being a gospel preacher.

Sometimes you just... Most of the time for me, I don't have a clue. I don't know how tense it is in here. I don't know how sharp this message has been.

I don't know how cutting it's been. I don't know how offensive it's been. I don't know how much of a blessing it's been.

But let me just tell you this. Wherever this message falls on the spectrum, I'll promise you this. It pales in comparison to the intensity of Jesus Christ splitting the eastern sky.

Prepare to meet your God. I'm not going with you. Jeff's not going with you.

Your mama's not going with you. Your dad's not going with you. It's going to be your own selves.

People get ready. Jesus is coming. Soon we'll be going home.

Father, in Jesus' name, I pray that you would search every heart and try every thought and see if there be any wicked way in us and lead us into the way everlasting. God, I pray this would be a message, not a sermon. I pray this would be a message from God that we simply would not be able to blow off.

Holy Spirit, get on people. Quicken dead people. Exercise people over their sinfulness and draw them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Begin that process tonight. Lord, if there's one here that you've already done that with, you've already made somebody ready, I pray that they would unashamedly and unapologetically, as these who have stood before this church tonight have, say, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I want to be identified with Christ, my blessed Head.

Father, you be glorified here tonight. In Jesus' name we pray. Let the church say, Amen.

The pastor's going to be standing with Brother Tom and the elders. You just let the Holy Spirit of God lead you. Pastor, I'm just going to trust your wisdom, brother.

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