

Peachtree Baptist Church - Part 3

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the necessity of true repentance and ongoing faith as evidence of genuine salvation in his sermon at Peachtree Baptist Church.

Duration: 1:08:55

Scripture: Psalm 51:5, Psalm 115:1, Isaiah 64:6, Matthew 7:13, Matthew 7:15, Romans 3:23, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Salvation", "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of entering through the straight gate, which represents Jesus Christ as the only way to heaven. He highlights that conservative Baptists firmly believe in this biblical truth. The preacher explains that salvation is a supernatural work of God, transforming believers into new creations. He emphasizes that true believers will begin to walk in the narrow way, even if they stumble at times, and God will lovingly discipline them to keep them on the right path. The sermon also includes a personal anecdote about a girl who had destroyed her life but was confronted with the reality that she had already heard the gospel and needed to make a personal decision for salvation.

Transcript

You've shown both my son and me, since we have been here, it's been a great, great joy. Great joy for both of us. I would that you would open your Bible to Matthew chapter 7, verse 13.

Matthew chapter 7, verse 13. You may stand if you like for the reading of God's word. Matthew 7, verse 13.

Enter ye in at the straight gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction. And many there be which go in thereat. Because straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, 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. Therefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.

Not every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wondrous works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me ye that work iniquity.

Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which buildeth his house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand.

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, I pray that these words would be a reality, not only in the heart of the novice, but in the heart, Lord, of those who have walked with you many days.

Not only in the heart of the hearer, but in the heart of the proclaimer, that these words would regain the edge they once had when old preachers walked the face of the earth. Regain, Lord, the blade that has been dulled by boys who carry a mantle, but know not its meaning. God help us.

In Jesus' name, Amen. You may be seated. Yesterday I spoke about many things, one of them being regeneration.

And that the work of God in salvation is a supernatural work, but in the United States of America and among Baptists, it's been reduced down to a few evangelical hoops that if we can get someone to jump through, we declare them popishly to be saved. And if Jesus Christ were to come back today, He would not cleanse the temple, He would cleanse the pulpit. Because it has been the pulpit sending more people to hell than every liberal organization on the face of the earth, and it's just the truth.

Not a liberal Methodism, not a liberal Episcopalian, but a Baptist who claims to know God's Word, and yet does not understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we will take people down a Roman road that does not lead to heaven, but straight into hell. A Roman road that will ask them, do you believe that you're a sinner? And if they say yes, we go to the next question, not realizing that it does not matter if they believe themselves to be sinners or not.

The question is, has God done such a supernatural work in their heart that they now hate the sin they once loved? And it is not a question of whether or not they want to go to heaven because everyone wants to go to heaven. They just don't want God to be there when they get there. The question is not, do they want to go to heaven, but do they now desire the Christ that they have spurned and ignored and hated? Has God done such a supernatural work? And the evidence that a person has repented unto salvation at some past time is that they continue repenting today.

And the evidence that a person is truly, is truly one who has believed unto salvation is that they continue believing until today. And the evidence that a person is saved is not that at some point in time in their life they prayed and asked Jesus Christ to come into their heart. The evidence that someone is saved is that they continue walking in the narrow way.

And this is the fault of preachers. This is the fault of preachers who have done a gospel reductionism. We talk about the Germans of the 20th century that brought on their higher criticism.

It is not near as dangerous as conservative Baptists with their gospel reductionism. How dare we, all these stupid evangelists walking around telling men after they've made some little prayer that they need to write their name in the back of their Bible and put the date and if the devil ever comes to them, they need to show them that. That is Roman superstition.

It is not the gospel of Jesus Christ. And this passage has much to do with that. Pastors of old were considered soul doctors.

They were discerners of the thoughts of men. Their intent was to know the hearts of men, help men to discover true biblical assurance, or help men to uncover that they're believing a lie and their faith is vain because it is not true faith. And these words before us this evening are some of those words that were used by preachers of old to help men discern.

But we have taken them and dulled them to mean nothing. If they are preached, they are not preached rightly. One of the things I always warn young preachers is this.

There is much talk today about expository preaching and the only type of preaching you ought to do is expository preaching, but you can do a perfect exegesis of the text, preach it with all the expository expertise of a master, and not preach what it says. You can dull it in such a way that it has no blade with which the spirit can work. Let's look at this text.

Enter ye at the straight gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction. And many there be which go in thereat, because straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Now, as Baptists, one of the things that most, if not all, conservative Baptists agree on and preach wholeheartedly is this, that there are not many gates to heaven.

There are not many doors to heaven. You will hear that in every Baptist church that claims to believe the Bible. And it's true.

There are not many doors to heaven. There is only one, and His name is Jesus Christ. His name is Jesus Christ.

We preach that. We preach that truly. I applaud men for preaching that.

But, as I always say, it is better to preach an out-and-out, full-blown lie than it is to preach half the truth. And the same men that preach that Jesus is the only door, the only gate whereby men might enter in and go to heaven, are the same men who fail to preach about a narrow way. Because if I were to look at most Baptist preaching and most Baptist congregations, I would have to re-translate this entire passage and say that there is only one gate.

The gate is small, but the way is broad. Because basically, we have congregations, carnal, unconverted, unregenerate congregations that all claim to have passed through that wicked gate, all claim to have passed through that gate that is Jesus, and yet when you look at their life, they live in the broad way. And no one touches them because of the Baptist doctrine of the continuously carnal Christian.

What we need to realize, it's not Baptist. More importantly, it's not biblical. There is no such thing in the Bible as a continuously carnal Christian.

A Christian sins, a Christian can fall into sin, and a Christian can fall into carnality, but a Christian cannot stay there. It is absolutely impossible because salvation is not a work of man. It is not a cooperation between man and God, but it is a work of God for His own glory, and His reputation rides upon the fact that it's going to get done.

We need to realize something. Many of the denominations that believe that someone can fall away from salvation and be lost, that belief springs forth from them watching Baptists. You Dutch? The Baptist idea, once saved, always saved.

Things like security of the believer. Now, I believe in once saved, always saved, and I believe in the security of the believer, but I don't believe in the security of the unbeliever. You see, we have turned the gospel into a flu shot.

Every preacher that's ever gone door-to-door visitation has run across this type of person frequently. You start talking to a person about the state of their soul, they don't go to church, they don't walk in godliness, the Word of God means nothing to them. Fellowship with believers is nothing that ever enters into their mind, but when you begin to talk to them about salvation, they say, don't worry about me, preacher, I've already done that.

Like it was some flu shot that they took that got themselves inoculated from the judgment of God. And where came such doctrine? From where? From the Baptist pulpit. No one told that person when they came forward and professed faith in Christ that the evidence that this profession is true is that He that began a good work in you will finish it and continue on, and if nothing happens, there's no change.

When you walk out these doors, you've got nothing here today. That's the problem. The old preachers looked at it in this way.

A lost man is standing here, unregenerate, without Christ, damned, condemned, on his way to hell, and he hears the preaching of the gospel. Through a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, his heart is regenerated, it is granted unto him both repentance and faith, and with that repentance and faith, he believes unto salvation. And in believing unto salvation, he is justified before God, he is sealed with the Holy Spirit.

But what will happen? Salvation is such a supernatural work of God whereby everyone who is truly in Christ becomes a new creation that the evidence that He has truly passed through that small gate is now He begins to walk. Yea, albeit with all baby steps, He begins to walk in the narrow way. And it might be two steps forward and three steps back at a time, but you will begin to see a change in the direction of their life and they will begin to walk in the narrow way.

And when that believer, if that believer steps off the narrow path, this all-loving, all-knowing God, this perfect, compassionate Father will come running to discipline them and put them back on the path. But the old preachers would say, if you have made the good profession, if you claim to have passed through the gate, if you have received baptism in a public declaration of your faith and you begin to walk, it doesn't matter how long it appears you're walking in that path, if you step off that path and there's no discipline and you continue off that path, you can have no assurance whatsoever of your salvation. And it is not that you lost your salvation, it's that you're showing now that you never had it.

If we would only preach these truths, you realize that everybody in this county thinks they're saved. And it's the fault of preachers. I would not send my child to a vacation Bible school in 99.9% of the Baptist churches in America.

Have some teacher that doesn't even understand anything about the gospel of Jesus Christ ask those little children, how many of you want to go to heaven and damn most of them? Harden their heart to the gospel with some silly profession of faith because it was a silly proclamation of the gospel. It brought no genuine repentance. It brought no faith.

It's no different than the Roman church who baptizes every infant that is born. It's true. We've departed from the old path.

Young men, you want some advice? Don't read any book unless it's at least a hundred years old. It was not always this way. It is not a prophecy, but it is my prediction that if things keep going as they were going, there will be no Baptist distinctives left on the face of the earth.

But more important than that, no biblical distinctive. Oh, my dear friends, we are to treat. What is this thing? As I said, men wanting to build kingdoms and they build them on the bones of unconverted church members.

A person comes forward, possibly genuinely under conviction. They sit there for about two minutes and some counselor knows nothing about the gospel, runs them through a few hoops and then gets them to sign a card. How can we be that way? We have to deal with souls.

Sometimes it takes hours. Sometimes it takes days. Sometimes it takes months.

We've got to go to Denny's and we don't have time. Oh, how God works so differently in the hearts of men. I have seen after preaching the gospel, young boys, eight and nine years old, just gripping their seats, crying out as though they were murderers.

God, can You have mercy on a man like me and be saved just like that by calling on the name of the Lord. But I have seen others that I've had to say to them, just go home. Go home.

I'll give you an example. I was preaching several years ago up in upstate Missouri and a girl who had really just destroyed her life. She was in her young thirties and her parents were very godly and she had done all manner of things to twist and torment her own life.

And after preaching, she came forward and she said, just crying, I'm lost, I'm lost. And I said, what do you want me to do for you? She said, I'm lost. I said, you heard the gospel.

What more can I do for you? And she just looked at me complex, just confused. And I said, I could pray with you right now. You could ask Jesus to come into your heart right now.

She said, OK. And I said, how many times have you done that already? She said, six. I said, didn't do any good, did it? She said, no.

I said, OK. She said, what do I do? I said, you have two choices. Seek the Lord until you are found by Him.

And He saves you and He tells you you're saved. Or forget about all this and just go to hell. She went home that night.

Came back the next evening. She looked as though she had just been to a funeral. I said, woman, how is it with you? She said, I cried out to God all night.

I passed out asleep. I have no assurance. I feel like I'm hanging over hell.

She says, what do I do? I said, you have two choices. Keep seeking the Lord until He find thee. Keep seeking the Lord until He tells you He has saved you.

Or stop and go to hell. The next night, we were praying in the front, her father and I, and the music started. So he went back into the pew and I continued praying.

And then I sat up in the seat with my eyes closed. And all of a sudden I felt someone sit down beside me. And I looked and she was there glowing.

And I said, what's happened to you? She said, I cried out to God all night and fell asleep in utter desperation. But when I woke up this morning, God spoke to me and He said, you're saved. And He shed abroad His love into my heart.

She said, all the preachers could get together and tell me I am lost, but I know that I am saved. Another example, I was up preaching about 30 kilometers south of Alaska. And when I got up in the pulpit, a mountain of a man, a huge man.

He was in his 65 or 70 years old. He could have whooped every man in this building. He came and he sat down on the front pew and I preached the gospel, the saddest face I've ever seen in my life.

And when I was done, I went down and I said, sir, what's wrong with you? He pulled out a manila envelope and pulled out an x-ray. He said, I'm going to die in three weeks. He goes, I've lived in the bush all my life.

To get to the ranch I work on, you either have to go by float plane or ride days by horseback. I've never been to a church. I believe there's a God.

And one time I heard somebody talk about some fellow named Jesus and I'm going to die and I'm scared to death. And I said, sir, you heard the gospel. And he said, yes, I did.

I said, did you understand what I preached to you? He said, yes, I did. Now, most evangelists at that point would have got him to pray some silly prayer and then write him up in a newsletter. And I said, sir, you understood it? He goes, I understood it, but that's all.

Who couldn't understand this? It's a small thing. It makes sense. I mean, I understand it, but that's all.

Isn't it amazing that we think that's enough today? Just mentally understand it and be willing to pray a prayer. Now, I have known men at the moment they've heard it, they've cried out for salvation and been saved. Don't get me wrong.

I'm not saying everyone gets saved this way. But I said, sir, you're going to die. I'll cancel my plane trip back tomorrow to the United States.

We have to stay here three weeks until you're dead. If you're willing, we'll seek the Lord. He said, what can we do? I said, we can read God's promises.

That's what we can do. Every promise He's ever given with regard to salvation and His Son, we can start tonight and we can keep reading until we collapse here in this church or you're saved. So we began.

An hour goes by, read promise after promise in the New Testament. I said, sir, do you understand it? Yes, I understand it. And is that all it's supposed to be? I understand it with my mind, but I just feel dead inside.

He had better theology than most Baptist preachers. And so we started again. And each time we pray, we start it again.

And finally, we get back to John 3.16. John 3.16. He'd read that passage, I don't know how many times. And I said, sir, let's just read it again. And he says, all right, for God's love, the world that I'm saved, I'm saved, I have eternal life.

My sins have been forgiven. I'm going to heaven. I said, sir, how do you know? He said, haven't you ever read this passage before? What happened? Something that must happen.

The Holy Spirit regenerated his heart, illumined his mind, gave him sight. Oh, that we'd put most evangelists on a boat and send them to some island somewhere and sing the doxology as it's taking off from the beach. My goodness, what a circus is out there.

But this is not the way. Someone comes to a preacher basically today and says, preacher, I don't know if I'm saved or not. Every time that preacher will say, well, was there a point in time in your life when you prayed and asked Jesus to come into your heart? If the person says yes, of course they did.

They're in the South. If they say yes, then the preacher says, well, were you sincere? Well, I think so. There is a way that seems right unto a man, leads to death.

And that heart is so deceitful, who can know it? You think so? You think you were sincere? That's what you're going to base everything upon? Or shall we not get into the Scriptures and take all the tests that are given to us by the Holy Spirit from the book of Matthew to 1 John into even the book of Revelation? Things that can open up a man's mind to know whether or not he is saved or not. We don't even know how to use those passages anymore. The entire book of 1 John was used by old preachers to either give assurance to believers or take false assurance away from unbelievers.

And we don't even know what the purpose of the book is for anymore. The passage is like this. Now, here's the question for you.

Is this a reality in your life? Those of you who have claimed to walk through that narrow gate, that straight gate, that small gate, you claim to know Christ. Is there a reality in your life? Is the narrow way, the narrow path, the path marked out by the precepts, commands and wisdom of God, is it a reality in your life? So that you sense God's blessing when you walk in His way and you sense God's discipline and others can even see it when you set your foot off the path. Is there a reality in your life that God guards you zealously and jealously? Because if there's not, be afraid.

Be afraid. Now, I want us to notice something here that's very, very important. He says in verse 14, he says the last few words, few there be that find it.

Few that be. Now, here's the modern interpretation of this passage, out of context totally. The modern interpretation of this passage is, is that we've got the world over there, Hollywood, Mohammed, all the

secular people, pagans, heathen, everything else, this huge group of secular people.

And they're all on the broad road. And then over here, we have this small group of professing Christians. And that's what Jesus is talking about.

That there's this small group of professing Christians, but on the broad way, there's all these wicked atheists and Christ deniers. That's not what this passage means at all. Not at all.

The few that find it. He's saying this, of those of you who profess me to be Lord, Lord, few of you will find it. That's the context of the passage.

And we will prove that before this evening is over. The context of the passage is this, of all those who profess me emphatically to be Lord, few of them who claim to be my disciples will enter into the kingdom of heaven. Because not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter therein.

Now, I want us to look at verse 15. Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. Now, an old preacher told me one time, your best friend is the one who tells you the most truth.

And that is the truth. What does a man gain from preaching like this? Except the feel of God's pleasure upon him. Because he'll gain nothing else.

Have you ever wondered why the old preachers that I knew when I was a little boy, walked around so ragged and tagged and beat up cars and everything else? Because they preached the truth. Men of whom the world not worthy. They were not civilized men.

They were not respectable men. They were men of God. What we need today is truth out of the Baptist pulpit.

Notice I keep saying Baptist. It's not because I believe Baptists are the only thing on the face of the earth. But it's because that's what I am and that's who I'm talking to.

And we need not to look farther out than ourselves to find much heresy. But another thing, this is for the young men. A wise surgeon can take a scalpel and save a life.

A fool can take the same scalpel and destroy life. Sometimes I preach very hard. Sometimes I have preached hard in the flesh.

And God has severely rebuked me. The people are not your enemy. We battle not with flesh and blood.

The powers and principalities and mights and dominions. Error. We fight error.

And young preacher, be very, very careful, because if your knees are not bleeding, be very, very careful to stand in a pulpit with a hard word, with a hard word. Now, in the immediate context here, beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. They look pretty.

They look pleasant. Men applaud them. But if you have all of the favor of all the men, God says you can count on it.

You have not His favor. The only thing that matters, young men, is that in the night when you look up, when no one else is around by your bed, that God is looking back down. That's all that matters.

To hell with the success of this age, because that's exactly where it's going. To hell with the accolades of men. To hell with whatever this world can give us, because that is where it's going.

The world and everything about it is passing away. Being pushed out, seek only His favor. We will be utterly astounded on the day of judgment when we see who the true princes of God are.

Oh, my goodness. When janitors who were prayer warriors are raised above the mightiest preachers. When some man struggling in a lumber mill in Iowa by a vocational missionary can barely put food on the table in order to preach the gospel somewhere other than the South, will be raised up above men with their mega churches.

It is being pleasing to God. Care not for anything else except to be pleasing to God. And it is not necessarily... Do not think that I'm saying these things because I'm humble and because I'm just a broken man and I'm so godly.

It's the only reasonable thing. Why waste your life on that which is not bread? Serve Him, honor His Son, and He will honor thee. Now, He says, you shall know them by their fruits.

In the immediate context, He's talking about false prophets. That is true. But we can broaden the horizon here.

And in general, it speaks a word to all those who come with a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. And yet, it is not a true profession. How do you know genuine Christianity? By the fruit that someone bears.

You see, when I'm preaching this, someone will say, Judge not, lest ye be judged. And I always say, Twist not Scripture, lest ye be like the devil. Because that's exactly... That is the most twisted Scripture in all the Bible.

Because the same Lord who spoke that Scripture, He spoke it in this chapter and goes on and talks about judging. When He says, Judge not, lest ye be judged, He's talking about this critical, pharisaical hatred, this judging religiously in order to claw your opponent apart, to climb upon him in the religious world. But it is the job of the elder, of the pastor, to discern the fruit of men and women and children in his congregation, and to go to them when he thinks it not be well with them.

To go to them in love, to go to them humbly. My wife is not from this country. The first thing she said she noticed when she came to America was this, These American Christians are so thin-skinned, you can't tell them anything without them leaving the church.

I look for a church that if my little boy, when he hits 16, if he's made, let's say at a young age, a profession of faith in Christ, both of them made a profession. But when they hit 15 or 16, begin to walk in arrogance, begin to do things that their father cannot see, but others see, the pastor sees, that he will come to me and say, I do not believe it's well with the soul of your children. We need to go to them.

I fear that they're on the path to hell. Praise God for a man like that. But most church members would hate that.

They would leave the church when they should be disciplined from the church, and they would go right down the street to another Baptist church. These are bad days, but these are good days. Good days for God to get glory for Himself.

Oh, my friend, we do no service to men. And I want to tell you something. I heard an old man say, when you do not discipline your children, it is not because you love your children, it's because you love yourself, and you don't want anyone to think bad about you.

In the same way, when you see a brother and sister in Christ that appear to be walking in a way that is not Christian, and you do not go to them, it is not out of their care or care for them. It is out of care for yourself and your own self-preservation. And that is an idol among most preachers.

I have found that all men are cowards in some way or another. And I have found that particularly among preachers. Must secure their livelihood.

Not when God can feed you with ravens. Not when God can give you water out of a rock. You don't have to worry about securing your livelihood.

You preach. God will care for you. You wake up one morning and an army of a hundred thousand men, all with hatred on their lips for you.

And if God does not ordain it, they will not touch a hair of your head. You preach the gospel. Worry not what you will eat.

I know preachers of old who lived six months on bread and goat's milk. But they lived. And they preached.

Now, he says, you will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes and thorns or figs from thistles? Jesus was a master. He's the personification of the book of Proverbs.

He is a master. He is clever. You never want to get into a debate with this.

This son of God. He'll capture you, catch you before you even know you've been caught. He's like a snare in the forest.

He knew how to gather men. It's like he was sitting there in rabbinic fashion. A rabbi would teach seated.

He'd say grapes. Now, I won't find grapes on a thorn tree. No.

And the crowd responds, well, Jesus, you know, you're only a carpenter. You're not a farmer, but you're on the right track. Jesus, if anyone comes to you and says that they've got a thorn tree that produces grapes, they've got something to sell.

They're either lying or they're absolutely out of their mind. Well, then, if I will not find grapes on a thorn tree. Then I will not find thorns on a grapevine.

Is that true? Now you're going, Jesus, you're understanding the process. No one's going to deceive you now. If anyone comes to you with a plant that has thorns on it and they tell you it's a grapevine, don't believe them.

They're either lying or out of their mind. And Jesus stands up well than any one of you who say you're my disciples and you do not bear fruit that looks like me. You're either out of your mind or you're a liar.

He could capture men. It is impossible to even conceive, except in the mind of devils and the hearts of carnal men. It is impossible to conceive that God could regenerate a heart and dwell within that heart through the Holy Spirit and that life externally not be changed.

It is a total impossibility. He goes on. He says, and this is very, very important.

Look at verse 16. You shall know them by their fruit. Look at verse 20.

Wherefore, by their fruits you shall know them. This teaching is sandwiched in with two statements. And what is he trying to say? If you do not look like my disciple, you're not my disciple.

The old saying, well, you can't judge a book by its cover. Jesus didn't say that. As a matter of fact, Jesus said that you could judge a book by its cover.

He says this, even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Now, I mentioned last night talking about ontology and philosophy, the doctrine of being or ontos, and how important that is that we have lost this idea. Men have this idea.

Well, they've done a lot of bad things, but they're not really bad. No, the only way you can do bad things is to be bad. Bad fruit indicates a bad tree.

This is much more than just having to be healed from a certain erring practice. This is much more than just we discovered a wrong way. This goes down to the very core of a man.

If a man produces evil deeds, it is because he is evil to his core. And here we go back to the lost doctrine of depravity. That men are truly wicked.

They truly are. Now, he says this. One of the most important passages in the Bible with regard to the nature of men, verse 18, a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Now, here's another instance in which preachers preach half-truths. They'll preach the second part of this verse. Corrupt tree, it says, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

We're always telling lost men, you're lost. You can't do anything to save yourself. You're lost.

You can't do any good work until God saves you and indwells you with the Holy Spirit. You can not do anything good until God saves you. That's being taught well.

But you've got to teach the first part also. And look what the first part says. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.

Now, that does not mean that someone genuinely regenerated by the Holy Spirit will never sin. But what it does mean is this. When you look at the whole of their life, you will see sound and healthy fruit.

But if you're looking at something whose fruit, by and large, as a practice, as a style, in its wholeness, is bad, it's because the tree is bad. A good tree cannot continuously bear bad fruit. Now, why isn't that preached? I'll tell you why.

Because we would be condemning three quarters of the average congregation in North America. You see, it is this thing that you cannot. Why is it, my dear friend, that our churches are so divided in this sense? In an average church in America, there is a group of people in that church that cannot get away with the smallest sin before God.

And there's another group of people who can live in out-and-out prostitution against His will, and He never intervenes. Why? Because we're seeing the wheat and the tares. Light and the darkness.

And men must be warned. Now, I realize that tonight I'm basically preaching to the choir, so I can preach with this passion, with this flame. But when I go into a place, a megachurch or something like that, I'd have to deal with the hearts of these people as slowly and compassionately, but bring them to see.

How can you say such a thing? You do not bring forth fruit. But what about the carnal Christian? He doesn't exist. You say, are ye not carnal? Again, do not twist God's Word.

That's not what it means. Now, the reality is your life marked by good fruit or bad fruit. I'm not talking about what you feel in your heart.

I'm not talking about the number of hallelujahs that come from your mouth. One question. If some neutral observer was looking at your life, would they see Christian fruit? And would they see enough of it to deem that you're Christian? Or would they see a Christian profession, but basically a lifestyle that is worldly? Now, you might even have a set of morals, but morals can be as worldly and grotesque as anything on the face of the earth.

I tell you, I have nothing wrong with the Ten Commandments being put on walls, but if you think that's going to fix this country, you've got another thought coming. The only thing that's going to fix this country is the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit bringing men to Christ. You say, well, he can use the law.

Yes, he can. Praise God. Put it on the wall, but don't think that's enough.

Morality sends more people to hell than immorality. Men love to feel fine. Satan would be glad to put every law of God on every hill and every wall and every post in this world if men just set upon themselves to be good.

Now, it goes on. Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. I am aware tonight that I am not filled with the Holy Spirit as I ought to be, and I am aware that you are not filled with the Holy Spirit as you ought to be, because at the reading of those words, we should have all collapsed in our seats in tears and anguish, laying on the floor and crying out to God.

There are days when I preach this in tears. There are days when I do not. Oh, that a whitfield would rise up among us.

Oh, that God would be gracious. To send a prophet, to even raise up a John Wesley. You say, well, he's a Methodist.

Yeah, well, those Methodists were more Baptist than Baptists are today. Oh, that God would send men who don't spend all their time apologizing for God, but preach hell. And not with amazement that God would send men to hell, but with an amazement that God would send them to heaven.

All these men today, the Robert Shulers and the lot of them, they are so... But listen, it is all over us as Baptists. It's all over us. When was the last time in one of these big churches that have a national pulpit, a national platform, did you hear a man weeping and screaming out, don't go to hell? And I hear so many places, these preachers, if that's what you can call them, and these people, intellectuals and academia and everything else.

And they're all saying, well, you know, we don't want to be in our church that Pauline, the Apostle Paul. We want to just preach the words of Jesus. How many times have I heard Robert Shuler say, when someone talked about hell, he'd say, well, you know, we just want to preach the words of Jesus.

We want to preach what Jesus said here. And I want to ask him a question, if I ever get the opportunity. Dr. Shuler, are you aware that if it were not for the words of Jesus Christ, we would know almost absolutely nothing about hell? Are you aware, sir, that if you were to go through the Old Testament, it is very hard to find a solid doctrine of hell in the entire Old Testament? I mean, it's there, but it's hard to discern.

Do you realize that if you go into Paul's letters, you don't hear much about hell? Do you realize that almost everything we know about hell, we know from Jesus Christ? Now, isn't that amazing? Saying, oh, I don't want to teach on hell. I just want to teach on the love of Jesus. It was the love of Jesus that caused him to preach on hell.

Preach on hell. Men are in hell. That our family members are in hell.

And many of them will go to hell. And it is a reality. And yet, God is still God.

I remember when my little boy was born, and I was out walking down this old gravel road and I, by side of my mom's house, and I, I prayed out, oh God, save my son. Get glory for yourself out of my son. And I was impressed upon my heart this.

Paul, I will get glory out of your son. He'll either be a trophy of my God. I'll get glory out of him as a demonstration of my mercy.

Or I'll get glory out of him as a demonstration of justice in hell. But I will get glory out of your son. People hear that and they become angry with me.

God will get glory. And on that day, if he pronounces condemnation upon my two sons, it will be their own father that stands up and says, the judge of all the earth has done right. You say, I've never heard of such a thing.

Then listen, because I'm sure it's been preached from this pulpit before. And you talk about God being the center of everything. God being worthy of everything.

You carry that out to its logical conclusion. You'll have real Christianity. Yea, if he were to pick me up and dash me against the rocks, what is left of me would have to raise whatever it could raise and cry out that he is worthy.

As I have said before, I tell people many times that have no assurance of their salvation. You need to repent even if he sends you to hell because he's worthy of repentance. You need to believe in him even if he sends you to hell because he's worthy of your faith.

And you need to serve him even if he sends you to hell because he's worthy. Because he's worthy. And he goes on and he says, therefore by their fruits you shall know them.

Oh, let me say something about this. And just don't throw a stone until you let me finish. Because I love to do this.

People often ask me, is hell literal? And I say no. I love to say no. Because when I say no, the liberals are as happy as they can be and they don't know what I've planned for them.

When I say no, the fundamentalists and conservatives are so mad that they do not know what's going to follow. There is a sense in which I do not believe hell is literal fire. And I'm going to tell you why.

Angels can walk through fire. Fire doesn't affect an angel at all. But the devil and his angels are going to be cast into hell fire.

And they are going to suffer. If a liberal comes to you and says, hell is not literal because it's not that bad. That's heresy.

But if a preacher like me comes to you and say, hell fire is not literal because whatever you can imagine about fire, it's infinitely worse. That is true. You would only wish that fire was there.

What is there? It is fire enough for our Lord to call it fire. But let me tell you this. It is far worse than any fire you could ever know on this planet.

It is the perfection of God's righteous indignation. It is the perfection of his holy, righteous wrath, his hatred against sin and those who commit it. And don't think that heaven is heaven because God is there and hell is hell because God's not there.

Hell is hell because God is there in all his wrath. We have such strange ideas about things today. And they're all done in the name of protecting God's reputation because we don't want carnal men to be offended at our God.

Oh, my dear friend, there is a hell and there is fire, but it goes so far beyond anything. Have you not heard that heaven, we are told, goes beyond the ear to hear, beyond the eye to see, shall not hell be the same way? Yes, it is fire, but it is far worse than fire. It goes beyond ear.

It goes beyond eye. And if a man could hear it and a man could see it, he could not communicate it. It would take his breath away.

It would tie his tongue. Oh, this is a horrible thing. You say, how can hell be that way? Most people have this idea that God is this cruel deity that somehow gets pleasure in torturing people in hell.

But you need to understand, hell is not torture of a perverted deity. Hell is perfect justice against those who have offended the One who is worth more than all things, infinitely worth more than all things put together. Hell is a terrifying thing because men who go there have committed crimes against deity.

Why is hell eternal? Because those men never repent. They continue gnashing their teeth against Him. They continue hating them.

There is a real sense that even the door to hell is locked from the inside because men hate God so much they would rather grind their teeth in hell than to go through an open door and bow their knee. That is why, preacher, if anyone is going to get saved, they are going to get saved from that hostile God-hating heart only by a regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. That is how much men hate God.

He goes on, verse 21, Not everyone who saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. John MacArthur says this, and I agree

wholeheartedly with him. He says, you want to know what your profession of faith in Jesus Christ is worth? Absolutely nothing.

Because many will profess Him on that day and say, Lord, Lord, and He will say, depart from me, I never knew you. Notice here, it is a Hebrew parallelism. Hebrew parallelisms are so very important.

When a Jew wants to emphasize something, he repeats it. He iterates it and reiterates it. Such as, holy, holy, holy.

Here it is, Lord, Lord. He is not saying, not everyone who secretly is a disciple of mine will enter into the kingdom of heaven. He says, not everyone who emphatically and publicly declares me to be Lord will enter into the kingdom of heaven.

But what is the evidence that someone has entered in? Now, you can twist this scripture around as some have done, and they say that doing the will of the Father is the means by which you get into heaven. That is not what Jesus is teaching. Jesus is teaching that the evidence that you are going to heaven is that you are about doing the will of the Father.

Now, here is the question. Is your life marked by that reality? Is your life marked? Do you concern yourself with the things of God, the will of God? Do you seek to submit your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? Are you marked as a man who is intimately, really, practically concerned about doing God's will? Because other than that, you can have no assurance that you were ever born again. So many people live as practical atheists in our Baptist churches.

They profess faith in Jesus Christ, but through their daily lives, God, no thought of God enters into their mind. No thought of God with regard to his will. And why is that? Because they know not God.

Now, he goes on and he says this, verse 22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name cast out devils and in thy name done many wonderful works. Now, I want you to think about this for a moment.

Imagine, it's hypothetical, it cannot happen. But imagine for a moment that a genuine, true believer in Jesus Christ is before the throne and God looks down at them and says, depart from me, I never knew you. Now, that's never going to happen.

But I want you to imagine this for a moment so you can understand this passage. Jesus has just told these people, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. And they begin their argument as to why they should be allowed in.

Lord, we prophesied in your name. Lord, we did miracles. Lord, we, we, we, we, we.

If there ever was the case that a true believer came before Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ said, I know ye not, depart from me. Would that believer stand up and give as his case everything he's ever done? No. That true believer would stand there and go, Lord, in sin I was conceived.

In sin I have walked. I have broken every law that you have ever, ever given. I, I, I know that.

I, I, I humble myself in dust and ashes. But Lord, nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to your cross I cling.

You see the difference? How many religious people, when I talk to them, as old preachers taught me to talk to them, when I sit down and cut through all the religious language and I just talk to them, how many of them end up demonstrating that they're hoping in their works? And how many have a true understanding? Nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to the cross I cling. How many church members, when they hear a preaching on the radical or total depravity of the human heart, they become angry.

And how many of them begin to rejoice and cry out, Hallelujah! He saves! He saves! That's the difference. Hallelujah! Ah, the real believer desires no respectability. Not unto us, O Lord.

Unto thee be the glory. Lord, paint my life as black as pitch that the diamonds of your grace might shine upon it. And they rejoice in their humiliation because Christ becomes all in all.

And the church member, respectable and civilized, marches out the door of heaven. And he goes on and he says, And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you. My dear friend, let me share with you something.

It is not so much important that you say you know him. I hear so many preachers say, Oh, it's just the most important thing is that you know him. No, it's not.

If I went up to the White House this evening and went to the guard gate and I said, I need to come in. I know George Bush. I'm not going in.

Not in a million years. But if George Bush walks out of the White House and points to me and says, I know Paul Washer. I'm going in.

So my dear friend, it's not so much that you think you know him. The question is, does he know you? You say, but he knows all. Yes, he knows all.

But know here all throughout Scripture defines and communicates an intimate relationship. Let me ask you a question. Does he know you? You say, oh, yes, he's always there when I have problems.

That's not the question. The question is this. Has Jesus Christ entered into a personal, intimate relationship with you? And have you entered into a personal, intimate relationship with him? Does he walk with you and talk with you? Does he wound you and then? Heal you.

Does he correct you? And then comfort you? Is he your only hope? Your only banner? I was preaching in a church in Texas a while back, and the pastor was just a wonderful, wonderful man. And he says, I want you to come and I want you to preach on salvation because I think a great majority of the people in my church are lost. And I said, why do you believe that? He said, because they're homeschoolers.

And I said, excuse me? He said, they're homeschoolers. And I said, pastor, what's your point? I mean, some of the godliest Christians I know are homeschoolers. He said, no, this is the point.

The banner under which they all rally, their claim to righteousness, their boast and everything else is that they homeschool their children. And he said, I am fearful for any people that stand under any banner other than Jesus Christ the Lord. Now, I'll probably homeschool my children.

I'm not against homeschooling, but the point I'm making, I will not think that that will lead my children to salvation. It will be the blood of the Lamb. And if we put any hope in our ability to raise our kids the right way, we could be damning their own souls.

Because the only hope that my child has is that God's electing grace will regenerate his heart and make him new. No claim, no handle do I have upon deity. Now, he says, and then I will profess unto them, I never knew you.

Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. The idea here is lawlessness. And I want to let me just give you a free translation of this text.

Just want you to listen. And I will profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, those of you who claim to be my disciples, but you lived your life as though I never gave you a law to obey.

Because that's what it means. I just described three quarters of American Christianity, if not more. People come to me and say, I have a new relationship with God.

I say, do you have a new relationship with sin? Because if you don't have a new relationship with sin, you don't have a new relationship with God. I have a new relationship with God. Do you have a new relationship with God's Word? Because if you don't have a new relationship with God's Word, you don't have a new relationship with God.

Depart from me, those of you who claim to be my disciples, emphatically claim to be my disciples, but you live as though I never gave you a law to obey. I never gave you a command, a precept or a piece of wisdom to follow. You did what was right in your own eyes.

And you dangled a cross around your neck or put one in your pocket. Now, just to finish, the passage that follows about the house built on sand and the house built on rock is one of the most misinterpreted passages in the entire Bible. Because people will take it and say, now, if you're a Christian, you need to build your house on the rock so that your life will be stable.

Because if you build your house on the sand, it's not going to be stable. And when trials come, your house is going to fall. Now, even though there can be a far reaching context to preach it that way, that is not the primary passage.

That's not the primary interpretation of this passage. What he's talking about is this. The man who hears this word and does not obey it is like a man who built his house on the sand and when the judgment of God comes, he's destroyed.

Like Achan, he and all his household. And the man who hears these words and does them is like a man who builds his house upon a rock and when the judgment of God comes, he stands. Because God has made him stand.

Now, just to prove my point, look at the context. First of all, starting in verse 13, it is indicated to us that there is a gate and then many other gates. That one gate leads unto eternal life.

All other gates lead unto death and destruction. There are two ways. There is a broad way that leads unto death and destruction.

There is a narrow way that leads unto life. Then there are two types of trees. A good tree that bears good fruit unto eternal life and a bad tree that bears bad fruit and is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Then there is a group who profess Christ as Lord and they're busy doing the will of the Father. Another group that profess Christ as Lord and they're busy doing their own will and their own works in hopes of

saving themselves. And then we go on and there is a group who hear and build their house on the sand and are destroyed in judgment.

And another group that hear and build their house on the rock and are saved when judgment comes. You see, my friend, this is not about how you can be a Christian and be healthy, wealthy and wise. This is about how you can save your soul.

Isn't it amazing? You go into any Christian bookstore in America, you will find every amount of books on self-esteem, on health, wealth, everything you can imagine. You can count on one hand the number of books written on the attributes of God and dealing with the salvation of a soul. And preachers, they preach the gospel as though it was the tiniest, most insignificant thing.

And once you get someone with that little message to jump over the threshold, then the real stuff begins. There is nothing greater than the gospel of Jesus Christ. And there is nothing more important throughout all the life of the believer than to hear messages on how to be saved and what it means to be saved and how to be secure in salvation.

You can tell what all these American Christians esteem to be most important. It is this life and not the next. I care not whether you have self-esteem.

I care not whether your checkbook is balanced. I care not about any of those things. I care for the day when you stand in that granite hall before God naked and you are judged and either cast into hell or delivered unto glory.

Nothing else is going to cause me to lose sleep tonight but that one thing. Oh, we ought to be to some a saver of life, us preachers. And to others, we ought to be a stench of death.

We ought to be a sign in Israel, a spectacle to angels that men will either literally almost kiss the hands that delivered the Word to them or stone the body. They'll hate us so much. A dividing line in the sand.

Eternity on our eyeballs. To preach as dying men to dying men and to preach each time as though we shall never preach again. Young men, there are old fools, old foolish preachers who know nothing.

But they are outnumbered by the young preachers who know nothing. But there are some men that are old in their days, latch on to them and learn from them. Learn not from organizations, learn not even from the academic.

But learn the true Word of God. Study your Greek, know your Hebrew, do whatever you have to do, but mainly be men saturated by this Word and filled with the Holy Spirit. And what most of you need is not more knowledge because you can't even obey the knowledge you now have.

You need to go up on a hill somewhere and cry out to God for a week without eating, with a dew on your head like a wild man throwing rocks at heaven until the power of God rests upon your life. Because that's the only thing that will separate you, the men from the boys.

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