

# True and False Conversion

by Ray Comfort

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of the law in preparing the way for the gospel and warns against false conversion, encouraging believers to prioritize genuine faith and fruit of the Spirit.*

**Duration:** 37:06

**Scripture:** Mark 4:3-9, Mark 4:13

**Topics:** "False Conversion"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker tells a story about a man who breaks the law by driving drunk and is caught and imprisoned. The man's father pays his fine and sets him free out of love. The speaker uses this story to illustrate the attitude the son should have towards his father and the law. He emphasizes that the son should be grateful and live a life that pleases his father, as the father's sacrifice has satisfied the law. The speaker also criticizes false converts who try to impress others with outward displays of faith, rather than having a genuine inward transformation. The sermon concludes with a discussion of the parable of the sower from the Bible, highlighting the importance of truly listening and understanding God's word.

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## Transcript

Charles Finney said this, Evermore, the law must prepare the way for the gospel. To overlook this and instructing souls is almost certain to result in false hope, the introduction of a false standard of Christian experience, and to fill the church with false converts. And then he said, time will make this plain.

John Wesley said, regarding those who failed to use the law in evangelism, All this proceeds from the deepest ignorance of the nature, the properties, the use of the law, and proves that those who act thus, either know not Christ, are out of strangers to living faith, or at least that they are but babes in Christ, and as such, unskilled in the words of righteousness. Martin Luther said, Satan, the god of all dissensions, stirs up daily new sects. And last of all, which of all other I should never have foreseen or once suspected, he has raised up a sect, as teach that such, the ten commandments ought to be taken out of the church, and that men should not be terrified by the law, but gently exhorted by the preaching of the grace of Christ.

Charles Spurgeon said, they'll never accept grace until they tremble before a just and holy law. And George Whitefield said these words, That is the reason we have so many mushroom converts, that converts that spring up out of nowhere and disappear, because their stony ground is not plowed up, they have not got a conviction of the law. They are stony ground hearers.

Okay, Romans 7 verse 4, let's read it. Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that you should be married to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that you should be married to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that you should bring forth fruit unto God.

In the book called Hell's Best Kept Secret, we have a story of a young speedster, who was drunk and drove through his town with his hand on a horn, 120 miles an hour. Now, the town had no law against speeding, everything was horse-drawn, a backward town. So, they gathered together and passed a law, stating that 60 miles an hour was the maximum speed.

Back comes the drunken. This time, they nab him, throw him in prison, land with a \$6,000 fine. He's got no money, no words, defense, he's going to spend a long time in prison.

His father arrives at the door and says, Son, because I loved you, I sold all my worldly goods and paid the fine for you. You are free to go. What, therefore, is the son's attitude going to be to his father? Well, he's going to be blown away.

He's going to be broken by his father's sacrifice. And now, he is going to live a life that is pleasing to his father, in the light of his father's sacrifice. Man, if his father did that for him, the least he can do is live a life that is pleasing to his father.

What is his attitude going to be to the law? Well, he owes nothing to the law, absolutely nothing. It has been satisfied by the sacrifice of his father. The law has no demand on him.

Now, with those thoughts in mind, look at Romans 7, verse 4 again. Wherefore, my brethren, you also become dead to the law by the body of Christ. D.L. Moody said, The law can only chase a man to Calvary, no further.

We have become dead to the law by the body of Christ. That's the payment of the father, the body of Christ. The law has been satisfied.

We're not under its wrath any longer if we're in Christ. That you should be married to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that you should bring forth fruit unto God. So we now, as Christians, those whose sins have been forgiven by the blood of Christ, bring forth the fruit of a new lifestyle that's pleasing in the sight of God.

If we're rooted and grounded in Christ, it should be evident. Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in me, the same brings forth much fruit.

Colossians 1 says, The gospel brings forth fruit. Now, what does the Bible mean by fruit? Well, very briefly, number one, fruit of repentance. Matthew 3, verse 8. If you're stolen, you'll return stolen goods.

Zacchaeus says, Fruit of repentance, return that which is stolen fourfold. Fruit of repentance, Matthew 3, verse 8. Secondly, fruit of good works, Colossians 1, verse 10. If you're a Christian, it should be evident by your good works.

Wesley said, Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can. And if you read the book of Titus, you'll see

again and again, it says things like, Let those who have believed in God be careful to maintain good works. 1 Peter 2.15, For so is the will of God that by your well-doing, you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

If you want to be a witness to your friends, your workmates, don't preach to them, buy them gifts. Somebody at your work, they don't like you, just leave a gift on their desk. You say, I was out shopping, thought you might like this.

Bottle of sparkling, non-alcoholic wine or something like that, thought you'd like it. You'll stop his mouth. He said, I don't agree with what that guy believes, but he really is genuine.

For so is the will of God that by your well-doing, you'll put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Often when I want to witness to someone, I'll give him a hamburger, it shuts him up. He can't speak through his mouth.

And it shows that I really care about the guy, I'm not just after his soul. Jesus said, Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Number three, the fruit of thanksgiving, Hebrews 13, verse 15.

If you're saved, you'll kneel at the foot of that blood stained cross and say, Oh, thanks be to God for the unspeakable gift. Number four, fruit of the spirit, Galatians 5, 22. If you're soundly saved, it'll be evident by the fact that you have the fruit of the spirit.

God's nature will manifest itself through you. Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, faith, meekness and temperance. And the fruit of righteousness, Philippians 1, verse 11.

You'll walk a path of righteousness. You'll be righteous in all your dealings with others. You'll have righteous thoughts.

You'll do that which is right. Philippians 1, verse 11. And then Matthew 3, verse 10 says, Every tree that brings not forth good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire.

Doesn't just say fruit, it says good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire. So as Christians, as witnesses of Christ, our aim shouldn't be just to get youth group members, church members.

No, we want to see fruit bearers. Because every tree that brings not forth good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire. So to get an insight into what hinders and produces fruit, look at Mark 3 of chapter 4. Mark 4, verse 3. We see perhaps the most important of Jesus' parables.

And verse 3, it's called the parable of the sower. He says these words, hearken, behold. And it's been well said, if you ever find the word behold in scripture, it's like a little trumpet sounding and saying, hey, this is important, listen.

If you ever see the word hearken, it means the same thing. But here we have Jesus saying, hearken, behold. In other words, a double trumpet.

Something important is coming up. There went out a sower to sow. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it.

And some fell on stony ground where it had not much earth, and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun came up, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

Another fell on good ground, and it did yield fruit that sprang up and increased and brought forth some thirtyfold, some sixty and some a hundredfold. And he said to them, he that has ears to hear, let him hear. And then in verse 13, we see an incredible Bible verse.

It seems the disciples had no idea what Jesus was saying. So, Jesus said this to them. He said to them, do you not know this parable? How then will you know all parables? In other words, the parable of the sower is the key to unlock the mystery of the other parables.

In the parable of the sower, we see there is true and false conversion. When the gospel is preached, when the seed is sown, there are false converts and true converts alongside one another. And once we understand that principle, once we know this parable, then we will understand all the other parables.

The sheep and the goats, the true and false. The wise virgins, the foolish virgins, true and false. The good fish and the bad fish, true and false in the net together.

The wheat and the tares, the true and false alongside each other. Now, the parable of the sower is also given to us in Matthew 13 and Luke chapter 8. So, using the harmony of the gospels, we're going to look at six characteristics of a stony ground hearer. Let me read the rest of that parable so we see the interpretation that Jesus gave.

Verse 14, the sower sows the word. And these are they which on the wayside, when the word is sown, when they have heard, Satan comes immediately, takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they in like manner that are sown on stony ground who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness and have no root in themselves and so endure but for a time afterward when affliction or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

And these are they that are sown on among thorns, such as hear the word and the cares of this age and the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things entering in, choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. And these are they that are sown on good ground, such as hear the word and receive it and bring forth fruit, some 30 fold, some 60 and some 100. So, as I said, using the harmony of the gospels, we're going to look at six characteristics of a false convert.

So, number one, in a false conversion, there are immediate results. Mark 4, verse 5. That is, there's no weighing of the issues, no doing what Jesus said. What man goes to build a tower and doesn't check that he's got enough materials? What man goes to war without checking to see if the enemy has got more weapons than he's got? No, there's no weighing of the issues.

There are immediate results. Mark 4, verse 5. Secondly, there's a lack of moisture. Luke 8, verse 6. Thirdly, there's a lack of root.

Matthew 13, verse 16. They're shallow. Number four, they receive the word with gladness.

There's no contrition or sorrow for sin. Mark 4, verse 16. Number five, they receive the word with joy.

Matthew 13, verse 20. And number six, for a while, they do believe. And this is where the confusion comes in.

We think someone's had a false conversion, but they really did believe. Of course they did believe. The Bible says they did believe.

They have a genuine false conversion experience, if you can figure that. Now we're going to look at some pictures on the overhead. For those that hear the tape, I'll describe the picture in detail.

In picture number one, we have two plants, all plants. We see on the left side, we have a large plant. It looks healthy.

And a little plant next to it that looks kind of spindly. And if we had to make room in our garden, probably the sensible thing to do would be rip out this one that's not doing very well and leave the good, healthy plant there to grow. But then something unusual happens.

The sun comes out, and the healthy, big plant seems to be withering, while the little, stumpy plant seems to be doing well in the heat of the sunlight. In the third picture, we see why the big plant was withering. Because the soil it was on was very shallow, and because it had no depth of root, the roots couldn't go deep because it was bedrock under the soil.

The little plant looked not very healthy. It sent all its goodness, all its energy into a large root system that was in good soil, and it sought after moisture. So let me repeat that.

The big plant was on shallow soil, and because it had no depth of soil, it had no depth of root to seek after moisture. It was on bedrock. The little plant had good soil and therefore sent its roots in deep under the heat of the sunlight.

Now, can you see that it was the sunlight that revealed what we couldn't see under the soil? Now, in the spiritual, the sunlight is tribulation, temptation, and persecution. Tribulation, Matthew 13, 21. Temptation, Luke 8, verse 13.

And persecution, Mark 4, verse 17. It is the sunlight of tribulation and temptation and persecution that reveal what we can't see in the soil or the heart condition of a professing believer. Just as it was the sunlight that revealed what we couldn't see under the soil and the plants, so it's the sunlight of tribulation, temptation, and persecution that reveal what we can't see, the soil or heart condition of a professing believer.

Now, if you buy a house plant, it costs you \$25. And you look at it and say, this is an expensive house plant, and take it home. And you say, I'm going to put this in a closet.

I'm going to put it in a nice dark cupboard to keep it away from the horrible sunlight. Your plant will die. The best thing you can do for a plant, a house plant, is put it in the sunlight.

And if you know what you're doing, you'll rotate it, make sure it's in good soil, and you'll make sure it's got access to plenty of moisture. The worst thing you can do with a plant is hide it from the sunlight, because the sunlight will benefit it if it's in good soil and has access to moisture. In the same way, the worst thing you and I can ever do is shelter a new Christian from the sunlight of tribulation, temptation, and persecution.

No, the sunlight will reveal what you can't see, the soil condition of his heart. Years ago, when Russia was in communism, I heard of a true story where a group of Christians, or professing Christians, were praying in a prayer meeting. Suddenly, the doors burst open.

Two Russian guards stood there. They were fully armed. They said, if you're not prepared to die for your faith, get out of this place.

And half the professed Christians left the prayer meeting. Once the doors were closed, put their guns down, opened their jackets, got out the Bibles and said, we're Christians. We just wanted to sort the sheep out from the goats before we'd risk fellowship.

Now, if our country came under a Russian guard cleanout, what it would do would purify the church. The professed Christians would leave. If severe persecution came on the contemporary church, it would purify the church.

It would get rid of murmurs, complainers, false converts, those that cause division. That's one thing it would do. It would purify the church.

And secondly, I think more importantly, if severe persecution came to a church, or our church, the contemporary church, what it would do is it would reveal to the stony ground hearer and the thorny ground hearer, the false convert, the error of his ways, that he's a false convert. Could you imagine the tragedy of propping up someone that you led in a sinner's prayer? Now, let's say you didn't do it biblically. You didn't do it according to the pattern of biblical evangelism.

Instead, you listen to modern evangelism, and you learned the manipulative techniques of modern evangelism. And you went up to someone and said this. Instead of doing it biblically, you do it like modern evangelism teachers.

You go up and say, if you come to the point in your life where you know that if you die tonight, you're going to heaven. And the person said, well, I hope so. And you said to them, well, you know that you can know so if you die tonight.

You know it. You can know you're going to heaven. All you got to do is repent of your sins, give your heart to Jesus.

And he died on the cross for you, rose again on the third day. If you give your heart to him today, you can have assurance that when you die, you go to heaven. Would you like me to pray with you right now and lead you in a sinner's prayers so you could have that assurance? And the person says, yeah, I'd like that.

So you take him by the hand, and you lead him in a sincere sinner's prayer. You get a decision for Jesus with modern methods. But you find there is something wrong with your convert.

There's no zeal for the lost. He doesn't evangelize. The world's going to hell, and he couldn't care less.

He's like a fireman who sits on the fire hydrant, drinking coffee, making jokes with his friends, while someone is burning to death that he has the ability to save. No, he's not concerned about the welfare of those that are going to hell. Secondly, he's got no hunger for the word.

Thirdly, he doesn't really get in a fellowship very much. But he's saved because he gave his heart to Jesus. So what you do is you read the Bible to him.

You pick him up, make sure he comes to church. Even though he says he's busy, you prop him up. Even though he says he's got Reader's Digest to read and TV Guide, he hasn't got time to read his Bible, you read it to him.

And you're able to prop him up, keep him going in his faith, right until Judgment Day, when the omniscient eye of a holy God reveals that he's a hypocrite, never found a place of genuine repentance. Whose fault is it that he made it all the way until Judgment Day with this false assurance that he's saved? Better to let him fall down. Don't shield him from the sunlight.

Let the sunlight of tribulation, temptation, persecution come to him and reveal to him his true state. And for years, I'm speaking from experience, tragic years of experience, where I propped up, professed Christians. I'd lead them in a sinner's prayer.

They had no desire to read the Word. Look, if you've got a little lamb and it hasn't got a healthy appetite, something is radically wrong. If you've got a lamb and you bottle feed it, it just about swallows the bottle if it's healthy.

And someone who is healthy, as a Christian, will desire the sincere milk of the Word. They will have a desire. They will say, well, David, I rejoice to your Word as one who finds great spoil.

And when I was a Christian, there wasn't a day I'd... I've been 29 years a Christian. I've never let a day go by when I haven't read God's Word. I esteem the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

There is a natural or a supernatural desire to read God's Word. I discipline myself. Hereby, we know that we know him if we keep his commandments.

But I have these people, didn't have time to read the Bible, didn't have time to get to church. And yet Jesus said in Luke 9, 62, if a new convert even looks back, he's not fit for the kingdom. If we even look back, Jesus said we're not fit for the kingdom.

That word fit, as you said, it means ready for use. The soil of the heart has been turned, exposing the stones of sin that are removed through repentance so we can receive the engrafted Word. Remember what George Whitefield said? That is the reason we have so many mushroom converts because their stony ground is not plowed up.

They have not got a conviction of the law. He said that's the reason we have so many mushroom converts because their stony ground is not plowed up. They have not got a conviction of the law.

I had a friend once, his name was Richard. He came into my office and he said, Ray, he said, I don't seem to have the zeal that you guys have got. I don't really care about the lost.

I don't have a hunger for the Word. Something's not really right in my Christian walk. So I said to him, Richard, have you got love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, faith, meekness and temperance? And he said no to, I think, seven of the nine fruits of the Spirit.

So I said, Richard, sounds to me like you're not even a Christian by your own confession. There's no evidence. Now, at that point of time, he exercised the fruit of self-control because he said later he wanted to rearrange my face.

But instead of doing it, he went home, examined himself to see if he was in the faith. And when he realized he wasn't, he repented. And within three months, he was in a responsible position with our church because he was such a fruit bearer.

Colossians, verse five of chapter four says, walk in wisdom toward them that are without redeeming the time. I used to look at that verse and say, walk in wisdom toward them that are without. Oh, yeah, that's them.

That's the world. They're without. I'm going to walk in wisdom toward them.

But it doesn't necessarily mean that. It means more than that. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.

Someone can be within your church and be without the body of Christ. They can sit next to you on a pew as a professing Christian. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without redeeming the time because if anyone will steal your time from you, it is a false convert.

It's a stony ground here. They will be hearers of the word and not doers. And I've spent so many hours counseling people that didn't need counsel.

They needed repentance. Remember, the plant was beginning to wither and die under the heat of the sun. If you look at that person, oh, man, plants withering and dying.

I'm going to fix it up. And you got fertilizer and you put fertilizer up to the top leaf. Is it going to help the plant? It doesn't need fertilizer.

It needs good soil. And a false convert doesn't need the fertilizer of counsel. It needs a good soil of an honest and repentant heart.

And a number of years ago, I wished I had a video camera because I was going to step across the road and I saw this guy coming toward me. Before I tell you about that story, I'm going to tell you something else. I was an associate pastor at a church way down under in New Zealand.

And by the way, New Zealand is a different country from Australia. OK, people say, oh, Australia is in the same country. It's like saying Canada, United States, same country.

No, no, they are a thousand miles apart. Australians speak different from New Zealanders. Australians say, they speak more like this, don't they, mate? OK, it's more nasal.

And they put their heads down crocodiles' mouths and things like that. They're rather strange. But when I was down under, I was an associate pastor of a fairly large church.

We had a senior pastor who was a very godly man, a real shepherd. He so loved his flock. Now, he was really skinny.

He used to make jokes about his skinniness. He only had one stripe on his pajamas. He had to run around in the shower to get wet.

The guy was real skinny. He says, man, I pig out. I don't put on any weight.

I think he had his glorified body. I tell you that for a reason. He was about six foot, 120 pounds, whatever, something like that.

But he was pretty frail. He really was. One night, someone came to his door 3 a.m. for council.

It was a guy from his church. They used to go to his church. One of his teenage sons got up and opened the door.

He said, I want to talk to your dad. I need some counsel. So he, knowing his father's heart that he was a shepherd by nature, didn't hesitate to go and wake his dad up at 3 o'clock in the morning to counsel this guy.

He said to the guy, go and wait in the living room. So the father got up, came down the hallway, stepped into the living room. And as he did, a 14-inch blade machete came down and hacked into him.

This guy tried to kill him. His teenage sons heard him screaming. They ran into the room.

The pastor's blood was scattered around the walls. They grabbed the guy. They almost killed him because they thought he killed the father.

Father lived. He had massive blood transfusions that destroyed his ministry, destroyed his life. Next day, another pastor called me.

He said, you heard of him last night? I said, oh, heavy. He said, heavy? He said, that guy went to my church. He said, can you imagine that? A Christian trying to kill the pastor.

I said, what? I said, hang on a minute. If someone in your church tries to cut the head off the pastor, you can probably conclude he lacks a little bit in the area of love, goodness, gentleness, self-control. Folks, we're going to stop saying, oh, he's a Christian.

He gave his heart to Jesus. No, no. Look for fruit.

Look for fruit. We're going to stop putting our arm around everyone who says, yeah, I've given my heart to Jesus. Now, look for fruit until you're assured or can be assured of its salvation.

It may not matter to you today, but it certainly mattered in the time of Paul when Christians are being thrown to lions because they were being betrayed by other professing Christians. As I said, the Bible speaks of false conversion, false brethren, false apostles, false prophets, false teachers, and true and false conversion. As I said, I was walking along the street when suddenly I heard it.

I went down the street and there was this car in the middle of the road, no muffler, screaming down the road. I thought, man, I've got to get off the road, step off the road before this guy kills me. Suddenly, as it went past, it slammed on its anchors, which is a down under co-occultism.

That means it stopped and it backed up. And this guy got out, as I said, I wish I'd had a video camera because he was the ultimate stony ground hero. He had three Jesus stickers on the front windshield of his car.

No, nothing wrong with Jesus stickers, they're good, but he had three on the front windshield of his car. When he got out, he had his shirt unbuttoned to his navel, and amidst the great bush of hair on his chest,

a little bit of jealousy there, there was this great big wooden cross dangling there to convince me he was a true Christian. You see, what a false convert lacks inwardly, he'll try and impress you with outwardly.

He said, can I see you, get some counsel off you? And I told him I was busy for a couple of decades because they'll steal your time. A false convert will have more stickers, more t-shirts, say hallelujah louder, and he'll probably even have a bigger Bible than most. I know as a new Christian, I came under the heat of tribulation.

I've never known anything like it. Anyone here had a wilderness experience? If you know what that is? I went into such depression after about two weeks as a Christian, but I didn't hold my fist at God, I dropped to my knees. This is, oh God, this is like hell.

I never want to fall away from you. I can look back and say it was good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. Tribulation strengthened me, caused my roots to go deep into God's word.

Some say Judas was a Christian. You may be confused as to whether Judas was a Christian or a non-Christian. Let me tell you something.

Judas fooled the disciples. Jesus said, one of you is a devil. Now, there's a good clue.

Judas really cared about the poor. When some woman broke an alabaster box of ointment, it was very expensive, Judas complained and says, this should have been sold on the money given to the poor. The Bible says he didn't care about the poor.

He was a thief. He looked after the bag. He stole from the collection bag.

He was a hypocrite. A thief. And he was living a lie.

A worker of iniquity. But he hid it well from the other disciples. Judas had no idea who Jesus was.

Absolutely no idea. Jesus wasn't worthy of this act of worship. That should have been sold, money given to the poor.

No, Jesus worth about 30 pieces of silver. No idea that this was life manifest in the flesh. The most precious, precious thing that ever walked this earth.

Was manifest in that body. But he hid it well. When Jesus said, one of you will betray me.

The disciples didn't say, oh, we know who that is. Old hook knows. Rotten old Judas.

Yeah, yeah. That didn't surprise them. No, they said, is it I, Lord? Is it me? They examined themselves rather than look to Judas.

Because he hid it well. False convert. Plenty of leaves and branches.

Jesus said, it's he who puts the salt in the dish. Judas put that bread in the dish. And when they still didn't know that was Judas.

Because Jesus said, what you do, go and do quickly. And it says the disciples thought he gone to give money to the poor. They still didn't know.

But he didn't fool Jesus. The Bible says Jesus knew from the beginning who would betray him. And if you're a false convert, if you're a Judas.

The only one you're deceiving is yourself. Because you're not deceiving your creator. He sees right through your facade.

He sees your heart. And maybe through this teaching, you'll be awakened. If you read the book of Colossians, verses 7 to 14.

You'll see that when Paul spoke of certain believers. He put a seal of approval on them. He said things like.

Anesimus, a faithful and beloved brother who was one of you. If he comes to you, receive him. He goes through these list of people and says he's a beloved brother.

If he comes to you, receive him. And he went right through this list of people saying, yep. You can trust him.

But when he came to a guy called Demas. He just says, Demas greets you. Why? Well, we see in the book of Timothy.

2 Timothy 4, verse 10. Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world. Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.

And so Paul looked at Demas and thought. Now, I'm not going to say if Demas comes to you, receive him. I'm going to wait and see.

And he was eventually exposed. So just as we begin to draw to a close. Which is a meaningless preacher's statement, which is often said.

Let me share with you some characteristics of a true convert. Then we'll close. The true convert is he who hears and understands.

Now, what is it that produces understanding in the soil, the heart of an unregenerate person? If we want to produce genuine converts, should we look around for people who hear and understand? Are they out there waiting for us? No. The Bible says there's none that understand. None.

So the understanding that's in the heart of the true convert must come from an outer source, outside his own heart. What is it that can produce understanding in the heart of an unregenerate person? It's the law. Paul says it's a schoolmaster.

It brings the knowledge of sin. What the schoolmaster does is it teaches sinners. It brings an understanding and knowledge of sin.

So we can find a place of genuine repentance. So he values a seat of everlasting life. So we can see that he's undone.

He's condemned. And so when he hears the gospel, he embraces it. He's convinced of the disease.

So will he appreciate and appropriate the cure? He who hears and understands. And I've been in meetings. I remember once I was part of the leadership in a city.

We had 3,000 people show up for a meeting. We had an international overseas evangelist come in. He didn't preach the law, didn't preach the cross, didn't preach repentance, didn't preach righteousness, didn't preach judgment day, didn't mention how.

He just talked on faith. And right in the middle of it, he said, ah, he says, stop, stop, stop. Everyone bow in prayer.

It's as though God had suddenly spoken to him. It seemed very spiritual. And then he used modern methods to get decisions.

He said, every head bowed and eye closed while the music is playing. You need to give your heart to Jesus. Something is missing in your life.

He said, raise your hand if God is speaking to you now. Hands raised up. Then he says, OK, I want everyone to stand now.

He says, now I saw you raise your hand. You come to the front now. He put psychological manipulation.

Out came the counselors as the draw card. Then came the music for the emotional thing. And then he got 80 decisions.

Great success. But I could see the facial expression on those that made a decision was like, what am I doing up here? I mean, it's as though they thought, how did I get from my seat up here? It was because they were manipulated by psychological means. Someone who counseled those who had made decisions said it was just a madhouse out the back.

No contrition. People, it was like a tea party. People said, oh, Bertha, what are you doing here? No brokenness, no crying out to God for forgiveness of sins.

Years later, I found out that 96% of that man's converts, and they were his converts, fell away from the faith. And the latter end, no doubt, became worse than the first. And the other 4% who stayed within the church, I even doubt their salvation.

Because there was no knowledge of sin. The true convert cries out, woe is me, I'm undone and received the engrafted word, which is able to save his soul. And if he's genuine, he'll bring forth fruit.

So you've got two guys in your church, both sitting in the front row. One guy's always taking notes, doesn't say much. The other guy's, how are you? Amen.

He's really loud. He's going for it. You're proud of this guy.

That guy doesn't say much. But suddenly your prized convert falls away. Don't understand it.

This little fella's hanging in there. What's happening? As this guy's got leaves and branches. This guy has got deep roots.

He's bringing forth fruit with patience. He's returning stolen goods. He's apologizing to his parents for rebellion.

My son-in-law, his name's easy, Mules Wayne. When he got saved, he went around and apologized to each one of his neighbors. Because he was in a gang.

He was a brat as a teenager. He went and asked the neighbors for forgiveness. Bring forth fruit with patience.

And because he's on good soil, it doesn't matter the heat of the sun, I'll make him grow. This is why James says in James 1 verse 2. My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing the testing of your faith brings forth patience. Paul says, I'm exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

In other words, Paul was saying, when the sunlight comes out, I'm going to rejoice because it's going to cause me to grow. Peter says, unless you greatly rejoice. Though now for a season, if need be, you're in heaviness through manifold temptations.

The trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perishes might be found to praise and honor and glory the appearing of Jesus Christ. You are in heaviness through manifold temptations. Your leaves may wither, but your roots are going to grow strong and deep into the soil.

Early in 1993, this happened to a friend of mine. He's a pastor back in New Zealand, a city called Auckland. And be very careful with the pronunciation of that word.

About in the early, mid 80s, a guy showed up in New Zealand who was supposed to get on a plane in LAX to go to Auckland. He showed up in Auckland. He went 14,000 miles because he didn't listen very closely.

Auckland, not Oakland, OK? In the city of Auckland, this pastor purchased or rented an old jewelry factory. And someone, when they went to throw out a piece of carpet, said, hang on, I know about jewelry. He says, let's burn this carpet.

So what they did, they got this big piece of carpet. They took it to a refinery. They said, would you burn this? That carpet, when it was burned, yielded \$8,500 in gold dust.

They vacuumed it and got \$350 worth of dust from the ceiling. Found another little piece of carpet, yielded \$3,500 of gold. And when it comes to the Christian, when heat comes to him, all it does is purify him.

It brings forth that which is precious in the sight of God. Psalm 66, for you, O God, have proved us. You refined us as silver is refined.

You brought us into the net. You laid affliction on our loins. You caused men to ride over our heads.

We went through fire. We went through water. And you brought us out into a rich fulfillment.

Often we blame the devil when things go wrong, when the heat comes. But it's God putting the plant in the sunlight. You, God, tried us.

You tested us that you might bring us forth into a wealthy place. You brought us through fire. You brought us through water.

When God takes us through fire, it's not to burn us. It's to purify us. When he takes us through water, it's not to drown us.

It's to cleanse us, because he wants us to grow. And that's why the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4, 17, for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. When tribulation comes to a Christian, it doesn't work against us.

It works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Now, if you're not right with God tonight, if God's been speaking to your heart, I don't want to have an altar call. I just want you to seek God yourself.

Just find a place of solitude and say, God, I don't know if I'm saved if I die in my sleep tonight. Which could happen. You'll end up in hell.

I don't want that to happen. God doesn't want it to happen. So confess and forsake your sins.

You know what sin is. You've got a conscience. You know what you've been doing is wrong.

And just put your faith in Jesus. And then pick up the Bible and determine to obey what you read. And you'll never look back.

Let's close shall we in prayer. Father, we rejoice in your goodness to us. We cannot express in words our joy at the cross of Calvary, that you didn't leave us in death.

But to them that sat in the shadow of death, a light sprang up. And the light is that glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, the image of God. You saved us.

And Father, we want to do that which is pleasing in your sight. Forgive us if there's any hypocrisy in our hearts. Any secret sins, we confess and forsake them tonight.

Of all the things we need to be sure of, it's our calling and election, our eternal salvation. Thank you for your goodness tonight, Lord. I thank you for these dear folks who have listened so intently.

And I pray the word will find a good lodging place and bring forth fruit also. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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