

# Counterfeit Conversion (1 of 6)

by Winkie Pratney

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of genuine Christian experience and the need to confront sin and problems head-on in order to bring about a lasting change.*

**Duration:** 52:22

**Scripture:** Matthew 13:1-9, Matthew 13:18-33, Mark 4:13, Luke 8:4-8

**Topics:** "Genuine Conversion", "Eternal Damnation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the parable of the sower found in the Bible. The main purpose of this parable is to emphasize the importance of genuine conversion and the preparation of the heart to receive the gospel. The preacher highlights that many people may hear the word of God, but not all will be effectively impacted by it, leading to eternal damnation. The sermon also emphasizes the need for believers to communicate the true message of God and preach what Christ would preach.

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## Transcript

Synoptic Gospels are the first three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. John's a little bit different, but there are ten parables in the Gospels. Parables come from a double word, para-beside and balean, to throw or to cast.

So, a parable is something where you throw something beside something else to come up with something, I guess. Of the ten major parables in the Gospels, one is on being fishers of men, one is a sick and a physician, one is a bridegroom, one is new cloth and old garment, another one new wine and old wineskins, one about overcoming the strong man, there's one about the wicked husbandman, the rejected stone and the fig tree. Now those are the ten major parables in the Synoptic Gospels.

Most of them in Mark and in Matthew, a few in Luke. But of all of those, the one given the greatest amount of attention in the Scriptures, is the one found in Matthew 13, Mark chapter 4 and Luke chapter 8. It is a parable which has been called the parable of the sower. And we could call it the parable of the sower and the soils, because it really deals with the ground.

So let's call it the parable of the sower and the soils, with the emphasis on soils. Of the 3,779 verses in the Gospels, 1,934, more than half, are Christ's words, and they're dealing with religious people. A great chunk of it is dealing with religious people.

Out of these ten parabolic illustrations in the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, the majority of them, seven of them, are full parables. And all of them have to do with evangelism, with the winning of people to Christ, with the building of the kingdom. And the one with this greatest coverage and attention, a key parable, is this one in Mark.

Now we're going to read the passage together, and I want you to see why I believe it really is the most significant of all of the parables. It's very short in Mark. If you want to get a pricey or a summary of anything, always read it in Mark, because he doesn't amplify very much.

He just buzzes ahead and gets it on. He began again to teach by the seaside, and there were gathered unto him a great multitude. So he entered into a ship and sat in the sea.

The whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And he taught them many things by parables and said to them in his doctrine. First, a great crowd was gathered to Jesus.

So the context of this is a great crowd that are hungry, that are interested in religious things. And it's to them that he gives this parable. And that's why it has peculiar application in our time, because I think we have a vast interest.

What is it? Over 90% of this nation claims to believe in God. At least 53% claim to have had a born-again experience of some kind. Now that includes those who were born again when they were dropping a cap of acid or, you know, or when they died before and they vividly remember their new earth life.

And I mean, that includes everybody chucked into that category. But it also includes a large number of people who, if you cross-examine them on the streets, said, have you ever become a Christian? Would you consider yourself a Christian? Have you had a evangelical born-again experience? They would say, oh yes, yes. Now whether they live like that or not is a different story.

53%. I talked to George Gallup, who came up with that statistic some years back. And I said, George, according to this statistic, a huge chunk of this country claim to be born again.

And I said, I've been meeting the other 47%, I think, for the last 20 years. So there must be some problems here. And he told me, that's pretty general.

It covers all kinds of things. But there are a large chunk of people who claim to be born again. And it was a crowd of religious people that came to Jesus.

They were not a religious. They're not the scoffers. They were there gathered.

And Mark points out, he with his fascination with the crowds and power and authority, points out that this great multitude gathered. And then Jesus got into the ship and began to teach them this story. Now they went out of sower to sow.

It's got nothing to do with singer sewing machines or all of that. That's this old kind of, you know, this sowing. Came to pass as he sowed, some fell by the wayside and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

And some fell on stony ground where it had not much earth. Immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. And when the sun was up, it was scorched.

And because it had no root, it withered away. Some fell among thorns. The thorns grew up and choked it and it yielded no fruit.

Another fell on good ground and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased and brought forth some 30, some 60 and some 100. Now how many of you got ears this morning? Put your hands up. Most of you? Met a pastor once, only had one.

He used to have fun with a plastic one and he plugged in. And he would, he would turn it around and do stuff. I'm getting signals here.

Slide it down, slide it down a little bit, slide it down. Is that good? He sat on planes and this ear was a little different color, see, than the others. And time he was sitting on a plane and a lady behind him was talking to him, that lady, she said, is that a real ear? And he turned it around, you know, to listen.

He'd really have fun and people preaching on, Peter cutting ears off, he'd flick his ear. You got ears? Scripture says, then listen. And of course everybody had ears in those days.

They said, well that's heavy, you know, we really ought to listen to this. This is addressed then to the whole multitude of the religious crowd. And when he was alone, they that were about him, with the 12, asked him of him the parable.

He says a strange thing. He talks about, to those that are without, all these things are done in parables. And you have to read Matthew a little bit to get the amplification of this.

This is not an arbitrary thing. When people came with hungry hearts to Christ, he just told them directly, go and do this, go and do that. When they came with seeking to find ways around what he was saying, he told them a story.

You can't get executed easily for telling stories. And he said to them in verse 13, and here's a key phrase, do you not understand or don't you know this parable? How then will you know all parables? It seems to me that from the importance of this thing, in which there are 14 verses devoted to this. The next closest is the parable of the wicked husband in Matthew, in Luke 29 to 16, which has 9 verses.

There's 14 verses devoted to this parable in the Gospels. 7 verses telling and 7 verses explaining it. And that is a significant fact to start with.

What I want you to do in this study, we're going to look together, is if you can keep your finger on these other 3 passages, when we look it up, I want you to take each passage in turn and then call out for me the key characteristics in each situation. We'll look in Matthew, see what Matthew says. We'll look in Mark, see what Mark says.

We'll look at Luke, see what Luke says, and so on. Right through first the stating of the parable, and then secondly, Jesus' explanation of the parable. Before we get into that, I want to give you, very briefly, the scope of the problem we have today.

If it was just simply a matter of being able to say Christian things and speak Christian things to the world, without doubt, the West leads the world. We have the ability in the Western world to communicate to more people, more effectively, than any other time or any other culture in human history. And stuff like satellite technology, these are videotapes we're doing now, audiotapes plus print, over 10,500 new Christian books

every year.

The new satellite stuff, I just saw Rex Humbart a little while ago, they have their program in seven languages, and it's interesting to see Rex preach in Japanese, or something like that. What they do is, on the satellite bands, they have a whole bunch of free audio channels, up to 14 audio channels on one video channel. So, when I visited the Cathedral of Tomorrow a year or so ago, they had booths in which somebody would be watching the Rex preaching, and they'd be preaching too.

And a computer would take the voice and stretch it and shift it to lip-sync it. So, there's Rex going, holy gosh, I thought I was going to like this. And just a switch of audio, and you beam down to another nation, you come out in Spanish and stuff like that.

He did seven languages, this year they're making a thrust to shift to 91 languages. Now that's, that's kind of a quantum jump. That's not 14, how about 21, then, like this.

So, we have the ability to, to, to say things to the world. The problem is, what are we saying? That's, that's the, I had a friend, he worked, he prayed while he was in high school, that God would make him, give him the ability to speak to the media. And his vision was to start a Christian communications thing, and, you know, lay these heavy tapes out to, Billy Graham gave him a commission to do different things.

And so, he was all set, and he got drafted in the army in Vietnam, right, when Vietnam Days arrived. And that was, he did everything he could to get out of that, so he could go on with his ministry. And instead, he was given the task of beachmaster in the Marines.

Beachmaster life expectancy under combat is about 45 seconds. What you do is, you land on the beach first, and with your back to the enemy, you wave in the on, signal in, because he said he was in communications, so they put him on beachmaster. You signal in the oncoming troops, while the other guys fire at you from behind.

So, this was not a promising future for a young Christian. He was ready to meet God, but not anxious. And what happened is, the day before he was due to be shipped out, some Pentagon general realized that they were, had this largest radio system in the world, bigger than ABC, NBC, and CBS all put together, the Armed Services Network, and that they were saying all this stuff, and none of the people, none of the kids who were part of the army were listening.

They were hopelessly out. They needed a communications person, and went through their files, computer spat out, this guy said he was in communications, and they pulled him the day before he went out to Vietnam to land on the beaches, and put him in charge of the Armed Services Network. So, he had direct TV tie-ins to all of the television stations in the U.S., and a 10,000 album record library to pull on, and could visit the set of any movie, closed sets, any kind of set, and ask questions of the producer, and he was given top-level authority.

So, he worked for four years in communications, the best there were, over 200, 300 face-to-face ways of communicating with people. And I remember talking with him one time, he said, I have a microphone on my desk, I could pick it up, and switch it on, and you could talk to the largest audience, networked audience in the world. And he said, now I've spent four years learning how to do it, and I can't find anybody who can say anything.

And our study is on the content of the gospel. It's not a problem of being able to say things to people. It's no longer a communications problem.

Any of us could communicate something. The question is, what are we saying? Are we saying what God is saying? Are we preaching what Christ would preach? Are we teaching what he would teach? To give you an idea of the scope of the problem, it seems to me that, you know, our problem in the country is not in lack of religious experience, it is lack of genuine Christian experience. A shallow thing, we could call it a counterfeit conversion, has eaten out the heart of the Western world.

I had a friend, he was praying that God would tear down the Iron Curtain so that the gospel could go into Russia. And a friend of mine who just returned from Russia said, I believe God put up the Iron Curtain to keep our kind of Christianity out of Russia. And I'll give you some examples from history here.

Here's what one young man, he's in a missionary fellowship now, he said, Most adults don't face reality. They're very reluctant to believe anything sordid or sadistic about the flesh and blood people under their personal jurisdiction. To them, rottenness is often a reality in the abstract, but never in the concrete.

It seems to me a great injustice is being done to our young people because of this attitude. Christian workers are supposed to be spiritual problem solvers, but no problem is ever solvable until it is faced squarely, called by its right hand, dragged into the light, and washed away in the blood of Christ. Recently a young missionary told how he had repeatedly taken his problem to a spiritual counselor, only to be told he should simply have faith.

So while he went to Bible school in the morning, he sat in showers in the afternoon, smoked cigarettes, and sank in sin in the evenings, while he was vainly trying to have faith that his soul needed. It is simply not fair to smile a spiritual smile at our young people, soothe ourselves inwardly by calling the difficulty superficial symptoms, and let it go at that. If we do, we're certainly the ones being fooled.

God is in on the facts. The devil knows the true story. The young person himself is painfully aware of his real condition.

I slid down the rugged road to perdition myself for years in my life, and always under the ministry of the Word of God. Nobody ever was kind enough to thrust a loving finger at me and call me the lowdown sinner I knew I was. I heard about heaven every Sunday, and things about hell the rest of the week.

And it seemed there was no one around who would graciously back me into a corner and plainly tell me which place I was bound for. We're surrounded by a whole growing generation which is immersed in fornication, thievery, swearing, hypocrisy, perversity, pride, and rebellion. Young people don't want some vague religious sounding drivel about comfort and peace.

They must be confronted with a strong God who looks them squarely in the eye, calls a spade a spade, and comes to grips with a particular sin and problem which plagued their day-by-day lives. I frankly admit I'd not be much interested in getting to know the God who is usually introduced by preachers and programs. This God is afraid to tell me what I look like.

Here's another one. There's a young man in a high school in Germany. He had excellent records in his high school.

It was a Christian school. He was planning on going to university in the fall. His examiners looked over his test papers.

His maths was pretty bad, but he was a good writer. And one paper was called, A Young Man's Choice of His Career. And Kitty was writing a paper warning young people they should consider God's will before deciding on their life work.

And his last paper was a theological one. It was called, On the Union of Believers with Christ. And they read these sentences which were the final test of the five years of Christian training they had put in his life.

Zeal for virtue becomes deafened by the tempting voice of sin, turns into a mockery as soon as we feel the full impact of life. Yearning for truth is deadened by the sweet flattering strength of a lie. Man remains the only member of the created universe who is unworthy of the God who made him.

Yet the gracious creator is incapable of hating his own handiwork. He wanted to raise it up to himself, and so he sent his Son. He causes us to be called through these words.

Now you are clean through the words which I have spoken to you. Abide in me and I in you. Where does Christ express more clearly the necessity of union with himself than the beautiful parable of the vine and the branches in which he refers to himself as the vine and to us as the branches? Our hearts, reason, history, the word of Christ all call out to us loudly and convincingly to tell us that union with him is absolutely necessary, that without him we would be rejected of God, that he alone is able to deliver us.

The year was 1835. The student was the son of a converted Jewish lawyer who was baptized into church membership with five years of evangelical high school instruction. And two years later the same boy became an avowed atheist, and eight years later he penned these words.

Man makes religion. Religion does not make man. Religion is the opiate of the people.

The people cannot really be happy until they've been deprived of the illusory happiness by the abolition of all religion. His name was Karl Marx. Now I believe in our nation there are tens of thousands of kids who if you asked them, are you a Christian, they'd say yes.

But down the road, just five years down the road, two years down the road, what in the world is going to happen? In 1960s there were tens of thousands of kids who came in under the Jesus movement, and the Church Renewal movement, and the charismatic movement in the Western world. And I think there's a groundwork there of knowledge of God that's begun to affect now. Some of these were teenagers.

There were kids maybe in junior high school. Some of them are in universities now. Some of them are moving up.

There are young middle class families across the nation. And I think that religious impulse that came in in the 1960s has begun to affect now the nation in the 1980s. In recent surveys conducted on college campuses, there's a great burst of patriotism that's come back into the country.

A desire to stick up for the U.S. Two-thirds of college students interviewed in a whole bunch of colleges said they would lay their life down for the nation. Now that's a radical shift away from the 1960s and from Vietnam. Some things have happened in the consciousness of the nation.

There is a network of young people who grew up in the 60s where there was a throwing away of materialism and all this stuff, and enough religious background there for them to know all the words. And the great thing about that is that it really lays a good foundation for a revival. When people know what they ought to do but are not doing it, when they have enough truth there laid at the base, that has not, somebody's not backed them into a corner and said, well why aren't you living like this? Then there's a great base laid for revival.

You don't have to put in the words first, it's already there. What we want to look at again is, what are we going to say if this breakthrough, which I'm praying and believing God is going to do, comes in the tens of thousands of people go out to preach to those who are away from church, who know nothing of this other 47% that don't know if they've had anything. What are we going to say to them? Let's put it like this, God is not stupid.

He will not bring awakening to a nation when we're not prepared to conserve the results of that awakening. And the only reason I think why God has held back on doing anything in this country is because if we disseminated what we've got now across the world, we'd hurt what's happening in all the rest of the world. It's been cut off from our Western ideas and cut off from our crazy views of what Christianity is.

So that is, I think, one of the reasons why God has held back the full force of what he could do. We've seen in this country a renewal. We're not close yet to a revival, but there's a, it's like a tide going up.

And what's interesting is when the tide rises, little ships come up first. See? Now, it takes a long time for the big ships to move. So all around you watch the little, little groups, little group here and little group there.

And the odd one person in this closet over here, that's the ones that first feel the tide. And eventually the giant brrrr type, you know, steamers, oh yes, yes, I've noticed the water. We've been here in the mud 40 years, but it'll come.

Is it possible to be religious without a Christian? Of course it is possible to be religious without a Christian, to without, to be religious without being a Christian. There's a book written in the 60s, How to Be a Christian Without Being Religious. We need to write a book now called How to Be Religious Without Being a Christian.

Our problem today is a counterfeit Christianity, a false Christianity. Two examples from history. How Christian can you be without being Christian? Here's a young man.

He got up at four every morning to pray. Pretty heavy for a start, isn't it? He wrote a list to discipline his life in holiness. He spent hours every day studying the great spiritual masters of his time.

And he met with friends every week to study the Bible. He preached to others. He went out on a missionary journey to another nation.

And he wasn't a Christian. His name was John Wesley. And one prominent bishop who studied John Wesley's life before he became a Christian, said this.

If John Wesley was not a good Christian in Georgia, which is where he went to this nation to be a missionary from England, totally failed miserably, came back on the boat, blown away. If John Wesley was not a good Christian in Georgia, then God help the majority of people who call themselves Christians. But

on the way back, remember he ran into that little band that were praying on the boat.

And up came this giant storm, looked like everybody was going to die on the boat. These guys were all singing. They were all excited.

Came to meet God. And John Wesley was freaked out of his gourd. He could not believe they were doing this.

And they knew he was a missionary. They knew that he was a preacher. They said, well, he said, in effect, why aren't you afraid? And they said, well our hearts are hid with Christ and God.

Is this not true with you brother? He said, oh yes. He said in his diary, I fear these were vain words. And he realized he didn't have what he was studying about.

He knew all the facts. He had all the information. But he did not have that reality.

And then remember reading, going into that Elders Gate prayer meeting chapel and hearing Luther's epistle to the Romans. Luther, another man that came from a lot of religious study. He was in a monastery.

He did not have that personal change of life that made him a firebrand and affected the whole history of the world. Reading those same writings by Luther on justification by faith. Wesley in his, talked about which Garth Lean has made the subject of his dynamite short little biography of Wesley.

Dynamite went to get hold of him. He felt his heart strangely warmed. And later on those beautiful words, I felt that Christ had given me birth to brother every soul on earth.

And out of that came the great awakening, which changed England, preserved it from what could have been a bloody mess like the French Revolution was. All right, another guy. Here's a man, he sang in a choir.

He had a great voice. He played a musical instrument in the choir. He was at church every Sunday.

He never went to the prayer meetings because he didn't feel like they were having their prayers answered. So he didn't go. And this young man went out into the woods and he was studying his Bible every day to see what God had to say about right and wrong.

But he was so embarrassed if somebody came into his business when he had the Bible, he'd throw books on top of it. You know, so nobody would catch him reading it. And he went out in the woods and God spoke to him in the woods and dealt with him.

He came back into his office and he was playing a song and began to weep. And the Lord appeared to him face-to-face and gave him in his own words a mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit. And Charles Finney got off his knees to be a man of God, to change his world.

I think some of the greatest revivalists in history are religious people that were not saved and then got saved. So there is great potential in a counterfeit convert to become real and to become a world changer because they've got all of this stuff behind them. Now how many of you got saved out of the streets? You didn't know anything about anything.

About three or four of you. How many of you came from religious backgrounds? You know, you have 87 grandparents that were all missionary evangelists or something. Now, I was essentially pagan.

You know, I came from an essentially pagan background. Not the beat-up strangle-to-death pagan, but the nice pagan. You know, the ordinary pagan.

So, but I had six years of religiousness before I got saved. The only value in that is that I learned a lot of words. I learned a lot of verses that were not real until God changed my life.

So I believe one of the biggest mission fields in the world today is in the church, kids and adults who do not know God. And there may be some Wesley's and some funny sitting there, smoking cigarettes and doing dope and preaching at night who need to get saved. So here's a message that is desperately needed.

Okay, that's the scope of the problem. And want to now, let's look at this parable. I want you to give me, please, an outline.

The first, can you give me the name of the first sower? We'll put this all up on the board. Here's a man, he's a sower. He's got a bag here or something, and he's throwing this stuff out.

Look at this book. You, three verses a day, Bible scholars. This was written in, look at the size of the print on this thing.

Would you believe the guy did two like this in his spare time? Nowhere was done. 1668. He, the guy got saved, 18 years old, started writing.

This is on the sower. About there to there in fine print. Now, how much are you going to get out of this thing? There's 14 verses in there.

Here's what Benjamin Keats says about the purpose of this parable. It is evident one reason or main design of Christ speaking this parable is to convince him that it's not sufficient to hear the Word of God preached, but that many may hear it, who have never effectively, who are never effectually wrought upon by it, but shall eternally perish. In other words, a lot of people will hear the Word, but still go to hell.

One, two, three sorts of ground proving bad, and only one in four good ground intimating. But few hearers have their hearts broken up or prepared by the convictions of the Holy Spirit to receive Christ. So not only is this a parable to wake people up on the possibility of counterfeit conversion, but it is also a parable that deals with the preparation of the soil, the breaking up of the heart to receive the gospel, which is something we have completely missed out, it seems, in our part of the century.

A lot of people before did what we could call pre-evangelism. They plowed the ground first. They made sure that before they pressed somebody to receive Christ, quote-unquote, that their hearts were broken, and that there was a real preparatory work of the Lord to bring them under conviction, and lead them, shut them up to Christ.

All right? Good tillage before the seed of the Word will take root and bring forth fruit to perfection, which three sorts of hearers never experience. Fifthly, it might be to discover the cause of man's damnation or their final apostasy, because their hearts were never right with God. So it's a warning.

And then finally, to discover some men who never were sincere or upright Christians, might nevertheless go very far in a profession of the gospel, as is signified by the stony and thorny ground. How far you can go without becoming a real Christian. Okay? Now let's go, and I want you to give me the characteristics of the first kind of ground.

First of all, what is it called? It's called the what? The wayside ground. And what is the wayside? A pathway, a road, a place you can stomp on. All right? The main road is here.

Is it a protected place? Anybody can stomp on that thing. David talked about God searching to see if there'd be any wicked way in him. This is open season, boy.

Anybody can stomp on them. Anybody can walk there. It's the broad highway of the world.

Now, what kind of ground is this? Is it? It's hard. That's not only hard, it is packed hard. I tell people about New Zealand, where when I went to high school, there was a new field there, sown with grass, and tennis courts were here, and our, you know, we had a, if I was in a classroom here, right? This is the way you're supposed to, here are the gates to the court.

You're supposed to do this. There were a thousand kids in our school, and about half of them played tennis, and there were four tennis courts. So if you did that, you got to beat the ball against the wire for about three hours outside.

Now, there's a big sign here which our faculty had placed for all who could read, which was some of us in that high school. It said, don't walk on the grass. Don't step on the grass, Sam.

Now, what we'd do, is we'd have our tennis rackets ready, and we'd be looking at the time, and when the bell rang, bang, we'd, gah! Grass is forgiving stuff. You know, it can just, shoomph, on once, and it'll sort of, ahh! Climb up again, but eight thousand indeed has hit you in a week. Boy, that's it.

You're out. You're gone. So eventually, we created our own wayside ground.

That's what hard ground is. Now, it doesn't tell us much more about that. Benjamin Keats will give you about eight pages on what hard ground is, but we want to look at that.

I just want to say this. When we look at Jesus' explanation here, let's just look at the story first. That seed falls on that hard ground, thump, there it is.

Does it go into the ground? No, why not? Somebody's been stomping on that thing, so it just lies there. Next, what happens? This is what we call three horror stories from the Bible. This is called The Birds, by Mark Hitchcock.

And then, uh, lunch, thanks for the lunch, and then it's gone. Horror story from the Bible. Alright, that's the parable.

Now, if you have disciples sitting there trying to look intelligent, and one of the chosen twelve, out of all the rest of this multitude, Jesus gives this story, this parable, supposed to be the heaviest one that he's ever done. And, uh, you're sort of standing there, and a bunch of people sneak up afterwards and say, uh, what, what does that mean? And I got the story, it was great, but what, and notice it says, with the twelve. The disciples were sort of also there as well.

Well, we, we actually know, but we'd like to listen too, just, I mean, I have no idea what he's, so Jesus explains it. Isn't that nice that he explained it? Now, what did he say about it? Let's write down characteristics in this ground. Verse 14.

First of all, tell us what the seed is. The Word. That's interesting.

If you compare some of these other Gospels, there is also another alternate explanation of this parable, that in many ways parallels what we're going to look at here, but it's quite different. Sometimes God sows people. He does.

He scatters people. It's the Word, but sometimes He scatters people. He scatters people into the world.

So another possibility of this parable, and it's a rich, rich parable, is that what He's talking about here is His Word incarnated in people, because that's the best way Christ has to witness, is to put Himself inside somebody else, and let His love and His light and His wisdom and His power shine through somebody. If you want somebody to know what Christ is like, the best way to do it is to meet somebody who's met Him, and whom that, in that person, we could say a Christian is somebody in whom Christ dwells, for whom Christ died, and through whom Christ works. So an alternate possibility is that God scatters people through an age, and that these soils are different cultures or different ages into which God throws His people, and that they, depending on how that culture has been prepared or how that age has been prepared, it gives differing results.

Okay, so think of that word, not just as maybe a verse, but maybe a person who is living out that scripture, who, who is like Jesus' ambassador or a representative, or He incarnates His Spirit again in a person's life, and scatters them through the world. Okay, so is anything wrong with the seed? Nothing is said about the seed. It's the same seed, it seems in each one, it just, it goes up, throws it out, it doesn't pick it in, it's a funny looking seed.

Nothing wrong with the seed. Isn't it interesting how seed, seed is a dynamite illustration of the gospel, because if it sits up on a shelf, it doesn't grow. But if you put it in the ground, it takes a miracle to make it grow.

See, there's a work of man, and there's a work of God, and they both work together. A bag of seed up on a shelf does not grow a field of corn. But you make up your own seed, Jack, and you throw it out, and you can sit a long time, and you ain't gonna have a field of corn.

And Finney actually used that as an illustration of revival. He said, you plow the field, you sow the soil, you sow the soil with the seed, and then God must bring the rain, and God must bring the sunshine, and God must make the thing grow. So there is a work which God requires us to do in evangelism, and a work which only He can do.

He won't repent for us, He won't believe for us, He will not go out for us, He's told us to do those things. There are things that only God can do. Next, the soil we want to look at, it could be, you know, who knows? It could be Christ, it could be evangelists, it could be all kinds of things.

Tell me now about the soil. We've only got a couple of minutes to get this one in. Just read to me, have you got your fingers in those other passages? All right, let's buzz over to Matthew 13, and you see anything interesting there about verse 18? Can you tell me the first characteristic of this kind of soil? Now here, let's put it up there.

Question, these people, religious or irreligious? Have they had exposure or no exposure? They've been exposed. All of these ones, that's a common element. They've heard the word.

Not talking about people who have not heard, we're talking about people who have heard. And just how wide that is, is anybody's guess. In Don Richardson's book, new book, *Eternity in Their Hearts*, he does a mind-blowing analysis of what God has said before to cultures in the past.

He calls it the Melchizedek factor. And you go into a, he talks about, for instance, the Nagas. You've got a previous last day's article from Paul, what's his name? Paul Kaufman.

There was a report on what's going on in Nagaland, which is, it was in northeast India, where over a hundred thousand Nagas are turning the Lord, and used to be the rottenest state in India, and now it's the, it's the best. And they said it's, revival is not a really a good word for it. Revolution, a spiritual revolution would be better.

People, all the bars are closed down, and they just, people getting saved all over the place, and there are conventions of 30,000 Nagas there, and it's cut off from the Western world. Glory to God. They have no contact.

Can't even get a visa to get in there, and wreck it. Now how did that happen? Adoniram Judson went in there a hundred years ago, went to Burma, just about wore himself out trying to preach to Buddhists. And just all around that area, there were tribes of a hundred thousand here, and three hundred thousand here, and that, that had, in their folk lore, all of this stuff was set up for Christianity.

And Judson had a couple of helpers. He was laboring, you know, batting his brains out, winning one Buddhist a year, sort of thing. And these other guys had in their folk lores, the whole structure of the gospel.

Some of them, check this out. One guy, he's kind of a local village prophet. They're waiting for some guy with a white face, to come to them with a book, that will tell them about the true God, and his son.

Right? And then this local village prophet said, he gets a vision from God, and he says, I'm going to let this donkey go, and wherever this donkey goes, he'll lead you to this person. So he put the donkey in the middle of the village, and the donkey takes off. And this guy's followers, his disciples of this local prophet, in the village, no Christianity, nothing, no background at all.

The donkey goes four hundred miles. I mean, most donkeys would hang around for carrots and stuff. This donkey goes, and the disciples follow him for four hundred miles, they follow him.

And there's all of these, all over the show, there's stuff like this. And there's a missionary compound. Donkey comes trotting into the missionary compound, heads straight for a well.

The fellow, he looks down into the well. The fellow is all gathered around the well, and out of the well, looking up, there's a white face, blue eyes, a missionary who's digging that well. Right? He climbs out of the well, everybody falls on their knees and starts to worship him.

One of the monks, now check this out, you're a brand new Christian, you're just out there, doing a little missionary work, you're going to dig a well, you're going to win a Buddhist of the year. The guy comes up to you and he says, do you have the book that will tell us about God and his son? Well, yes, I just happen

to have it here. And they say, come with us, I'll try this.

He's talking about a hundred thousand, three hundred thousand who are waiting. See? And the guy says, I can't, I've got another thing over here to do. I'll tell you what, I'll teach you.

So they go out, win most of the tribes of the Lord, and start sending missionaries out to all these other tribes. See? I don't know. So God has had a witness through the world.

We're not dealing with people that have nothing, we're dealing with people who have some religious background. Sometimes it's a key, it's the word. The other crazy missionaries come and go, hey, you can teach that.

You're crazy, don't study that nasty folk religion. We'll give you a new name. Bat their brains out, people go, I don't know, that's a white devil's religion and stuff like that.

Building their own culture. Anyway, it's a neat book. Have a look at it.

It's called Eternity in Their Hearts, Don Richardson. You hear the word. I got six, three minutes, maybe less.

All right. Hard not to get excited about this. All right.

Give me some characteristics of it. Second, they're here, anything else? Ah, where did you get that from? Matthew what? Matthew 19, Matthew 13, verse 19 says, when anyone hears the word of the kingdom and what? He does not understand it. Ah, you understand it not, King Jimmy says.

That tells you something, you not only have to hear, there is something to understand in the gospel. Therefore there is content in the gospel. It's not like Schaeffer says, we don't have faith in faith.

It's faith in a person, see. It's not faith in faith. I'm just going to believe.

I'll believe whatever. I'll believe, I believe, believe. I believe, believe.

I'm heavy into faith. Faith in a person, not in faith. There's content in that thing.

It's the base. That means some people are lost and they are not lost. They feel like they are, but I did a study some years ago, well it's about 20 years ago now, on evangelism.

We've had some men of God who've really done a good job statistically. Like Billy Graham, for instance, probably kept better records, statistics, and done research on the results of his crusades than probably any man in the last eight centuries, in terms of statistics and follow-up. He sent people in to personally check in some crusades on every single name and address handed in.

Took him a year or more to do it, and to tabulate those results. And he ran into some scary things. In one crusade, it looked like over a third of all of the decision cards, the addresses were fictitious.

You know, that shocks you. You get somebody just being saved, you ask him for his name and address, he gives you one that isn't there. What kind of salvation is that? You start asking questions.

You start checking again. And a man of integrity like Billy Graham, I know in like a period of a decade, changed his follow-up program about five times, trying to deal with this thing. And one of the things he

mentioned, was it three years ago? That if he had to start again, if he was like some of your age or my age, he was starting again, he would put more cost into presentation of the gospel.

Emphasize more the cost. So there is something to understand, something to know. What interested me, is that I graphed these results.

You know, when the decision cards, you know, what they call first-time inquirers, and backsliders, you know, they have different sort of categories for people. You know the one that was the highest one? Yeah, it was called assurance of salvation. Isn't that an interesting thing? A huge percentage of people came for assurance of salvation.

They did not know they were saved. They thought they were. They, you know, I mean the words were there, but somehow they didn't ring true with their lives.

And I think that's an accurate analysis of what has happened. There are a lot of people who think they're Christians. If you ask them, they'd say yes, but there's not a ringing confidence that goes, the Spirit answers to the blood and tells me I'm born of God.

Ah! Well, I'll give you one more minute and then we'll have to take a break, because we'll run out of tape and it'll go and eat the recorder up. Just write this down. It is possible to present the gospel, I hate to use these words because they could be misunderstood, but we'll say in an illogical and we'll say unphilosophical way, and by that I do not mean that you have to speak like a philosopher or you have to give this deep analysis of all the detail.

Put it simply like that. It is possible to preach a crazy gospel, and what kind of converts will you have? Crazy converts. If you present something that does not tie in with what God has said, if you preach an imaginary gospel, you'll have to put up with an imaginary conversion.

You come up with your own idea of what the gospel is and preach that, you'll come up with your own converts. Like Dale Moody ran into a guy, drunk as a skunk, and he said, remember me Mr. Moody, I'm one of your converts. Moody said, you must be, you sure aren't one of God's.

Billy Graham was talking about a guy who was flying in a plane, the guy was right ahead of him, drunk, making a lot of noise, you know, attacking the stewardesses and they're trying to calm him down. So they finally said to him, excuse me sir, do you know, could you be a little more quiet, do you know who's sitting immediately behind you? And he said, no. He said, it's Dr. Billy Graham, evangelist.

And Billy said, this big face, red, beefy face, came around the back of the chair. You really Billy Graham? Billy, you know, embarrassed, he said, oh yes I am. And the guy says, well, I want to shake your hand, you've done me a lot of good.

You may sit at some place like that, but you wish you were not an evangelist. Alright, take a break, we'll come back to this in a little while.

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