

Counterfeit Conversion (3 of 6)

by Winkie Pratney

Winkie Pratney's sermon explores the dangers of counterfeit conversion through the lens of the rocky ground in the Parable of the Sower, emphasizing the need for deep roots in faith.

Duration: 56:25

Scripture: Matthew 13:20

Topics: "Counterfeit Conversion", "True Discipleship"

Description

Winkie Pratney emphasizes the significance of the Parable of the Sower, particularly focusing on the rocky soil that represents a counterfeit conversion. He warns that many who appear to accept Christ may not have truly understood the depth of repentance and the cost of discipleship, leading to a shallow faith that cannot withstand trials. Pratney highlights the dangers of religious deception in the evangelical church, where individuals may embrace a form of faith without genuine transformation. He stresses the importance of rooting oneself deeply in Christ to endure persecution and tribulation, rather than relying on superficial experiences or societal acceptance. Ultimately, he calls for a return to true repentance and a commitment to the lordship of Christ in every aspect of life.

Transcript

We are going to continue on a study we've been doing on what we've called the Parable of the Sower and the Soils. And we said this parable was probably the most important parable in the Synoptic Gospels, out of Matthew, Mark and Luke, more attention is given in actual space to this parable than any other parable in those three Gospels. Fourteen verses compared to the next highest, nine, are given to this parable.

Jesus also says in the book of Mark, concerning this parable, when the people ask Him, what does it mean? Do you not understand this parable? How then will you know all parables? So I believe this one is a central one, a key one, a one that has significance, especially in our time. Now we said in our last tape, our last session, what is the key sign of the last days according to Matthew 24? Deception. What kind of deception? Religious deception.

We usually put that on the cults and we blame the poor old cults. You know, people into this and they're doing that and thank God that we're not into that. We're, the evangelical church is in great danger today because if you were the devil and you wanted to fool the world, would you come wearing red PJs and pitchfork and horns? If you're going to fool somebody, what do you do? You make things as much as possible like the real thing.

You don't make, if you're going to make counterfeit money, you don't make a 20 foot wide triangular with purple and yellow spots on it, do you? You look at the real, you study the real and you duplicate it as closely as possible but the fact of the matter is it's not backed up by the government. It has no worth. It's like the guy that was selling vacuum cleaners and he sold 300 in one day and the guy said, that's incredible, 300 vacuum cleaners at \$250, what kind of commission? He said \$250.

I sold them for \$2.50. Now, point is, that factory are not going to deliver those vacuum cleaners. They're going to fire one salesman and do some apologies by letter and refunds of \$2.50 and the king of kings backs up his gospel. If we preach something that is imaginary or our own crazy humanistic methods, I am not so afraid of secular humanism.

I am more afraid of evangelical humanism, one that uses the right language, that puts the right words but at the heart of it, Jesus does not rule. He is, somebody put it like this, most people don't mind Christ being king as long as they can be the prime minister with a real power in their own hands and the same is true in our day. We don't mind the word Christ being king.

It's just when he is king in reality, it's a scary thing. So this parable is given as Benjamin Keech pointed out one of our last sessions for a number of things. It's to warn us of the danger of deception.

Another thing is to speak about the lack of preparation the soil may have had from the Holy Spirit before that seed is sown. A third one would be that many people who think they are Christians and wonder why the Christian life does not work, effectively for them have never really come through all the way and that's a great danger. Today we're going to look at one that possibly more than any other in the United States of America would be a major form of counterfeit conversion.

We're going to study today the second soil. One we looked at in the last session was what? Wayside ground and we looked at that time at the difference between two kinds of rulership on your life. That's moral.

Can you remember those two forms? One was legal and one was gospel. What are the characteristics of a legal rule? Selfishness is at the heart of the thing. In other words you don't have to be a Christian to be moral.

You can be in the moral majority and not be a Christian. You understand that? You can be a good person at least in terms of society without being a Christian. The scripture says if you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children and then refers back to God.

So it's possible for people whose hearts are not right to do nice things, to do moral things. And the characteristics of a legally controlled life, what are the two parameters that control that? Reward and punishment. Taken out to extremes they become threat and bribe.

And a life that is ruled by threat and bribe, by reward and punishment is not a gospel life. Secondly, the gospel itself. What is the chief characteristic of a person who has become a genuine Christian? Love or unselfishness.

It's a bit difficult to use a negative word like unselfishness because unselfishness looks like, as C.S. Lewis pointed out, the things you give up. And the emphasis in the Bible is not the negative, it's the positive. The one who finds the pearl gladly sells all that he has to buy that one pearl.

The one who finds a treasure in the field doesn't moan about the boat that he had to sell to buy the field. And it's not the cost that's important in the Christian life, it's the value of what you see. Whether that field is Christ or that field is the treasure of Christ's inheritance and the saints, it doesn't matter.

The point is that the value is worth the cost. And when people talk about how hard it was to be a Christian, I think one of two things. They either haven't made it yet or they do not understand the greatness and the glory of Christ himself and the kingdom to which he's called man.

The cost means nothing when you see the value, nothing at all. And that's why Barry McGuire was in England years ago listening to some group singing how hard it was, hard road to follow the Lord. And he got so mad he got a napkin and he got one of those magic markers and he wrote, It's a happy road.

It really is. It's not. Jesus said, My yoke is easy and my burden is light.

It is simple but not simplistic. It is complex but not complicated. It is a kingdom that has child hearts.

And Paul warned people, I warn you, to take you from the simplicity that is in Christ and pervert you by philosophical things that build up that have no foundational reality. Can you give me a couple of examples of legal stress in our day that have come by failure to understand it? Can you give me an example of the bribe thing or the threat thing in our day? Yes. Attracts, I'll repeat this for the purpose of the video.

There are tracts that stress. Come to Jesus, get a duplex in heaven, hot and cold running water. And now, do you have a home in heaven? Yes, you do.

Is there a real hell? Yes, there is. God is angry with the wicked every day. But to hold up the threat and the bribe, the only thing that really can do is awaken you.

You come near the mountain in the old days that was lit with fire, boy, and a beast touched it, he was killed instantly. You thought, oh baby, you know, God is very heavy duty. You don't even mess with a mountain that he's on, you know, let alone come near him.

And remember Moses who spent time in the direct presence of God when he came down here to wear a veil over his face because the people couldn't look on his face. They were afraid of Moses. And he was only hanging around God.

So, you can imagine what it'd be like to run into one of those old Christians who'd walked out of the presence of God in days of revival. Boy, if you held sin in your life, you'd be scared to walk down the same street. And some did.

Funny things happen in those days. Now we're going to look at this second parable. We've looked basically at the legal faith.

Now we want to look at the one. Can you give me, first, we'll look at all three, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew 13 is the record in Matthew.

Mark 4 is the record in Mark. And Luke 8 in the book of Luke. Can you tell me, first of all, what this kind of ground is called? The rocky ground, all right? Let's draw this this time.

Now, most of you know that in thunderstorms, there's a little cycle that goes on in a thunderstorm. As lightning goes through the air, it creates, it fuses nitrogen and oxygen and nitrites. And then later, they're

oxidized to nitrates in the soil.

Fertilize the top soils of the ground so that this top layer of soil, even if it's a thin layer, is usually more fertile. Just simply from atmospheric stuff, not any natural fertilization from plants or something like that, dying or animal waste or all of that. So this top layer is pretty good.

But this particular soil we're looking at is called rocky soil. Now that doesn't mean it's soil made of rocks. It means soil that has rocks in it, okay? Or stony ground, it's called.

And the difference between this soil and our previous soil is that the ground at the top is soft. It's not bad-looking soil. It has never been plowed, but it's just soft.

It's not being stood on. But down here, there are rocks. Deep, unbroken rocks.

So the characteristics of this soil is that when the seed falls into it, something happens to it. Can you tell me from Scripture what happens? It springs up, one word, immediately. First sign, then, of this kind of soil is an extremely rapid growth, like this.

Person gets saved on the Monday, and by Sunday, they're teaching the adult Bible class. By the following weekend, they're going to make Billy Graham look like a backslider. Three weeks later, they're the world's greatest evangelist.

One month later, they have dropped out of the Christian life and are gone forever. What happened? Read it and tell me what the Scripture says. Four threats that sprung up, and then, what have we got? We've got Matthew.

Somebody want to read the section in Matthew? Yeah, you got it? Yes, just read that chunk out. Yet hath he not root in himself, but girth for a while? For when the tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended. Okay, that's the explanation.

Go back to verse 5 and 6 and read that bit first. We'll just look at the thing itself, and we'll give them the explanation. Some fell upon stony places where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up because they had no deepness of earth.

Okay, now, see these words? It fell into stony places where there was not much earth. So there is some earth there. And forthwith they sprang up.

Why? Because there was no deepness of earth. What does this tell you about the roots? They're shallow, shallow. They didn't go down.

They went out, is what happens. Now, all gardeners know this, that when you water on a hot day, you wait until it's, you're supposed to wait until it's cool and water, and you're supposed to overwater. You don't, you don't just water a little bit.

Why not? Because it'll only soak in the top and evaporate. There's another reason. If it doesn't go down, then it'll only wet the top, and the roots that are down will turn around and go up looking for the soil.

If they come close to the top, what's going to happen to it? They're going to be dried out and die. So you always overwater so that the water goes really down into the ground, which encourages the roots to go down. Now, if the reverse happens, or if there are rocks down there, so that the roots don't actually find it

easy to get through, they will turn and go sideways and pick up all of this topsoil nutriment, and that's what creates that fast growth.

They become super fertilized. Their roots go this way instead of up, and they, all over the place, they grow, like that. It is a danger sign for a plant to grow abnormally fast.

It usually means that that root is not going down, it's going out. And every gardener that sees a plant springing up abnormally fast with no fertilizer or anything like that ought to think, uh-oh, has this been plowed, has it been done right? Now, does Mark add anything to this? Mark 4, some fell on stony ground where it had not much earth, immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. Same thing, no depth, no deepness, or shallowness is another word.

Luke 8, some fell on a rock, and Luke stresses this hard unbrokenness underneath, and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. All right, question, why do people drop out of the Christian life? Fundamental question. Would you like to know the names of some of the famous musicians of the past, who were Christians, who were, you know, isn't that wonderful, so-and-so became a Christian, boop-boop, you know, and fill in the blanks.

I don't know how many in the last decade or 20 years that I know of that claim to be Christians, and, you know, much media publicity was made of that, and where are they now? I'll give you a list afterwards. I was in a radio program in Southern California about 15 years ago, a long time ago, and we're talking, it was a talkback thing, and I was with a pastor, a friend of mine that's out there, and we're both being interviewed by this radio host, and it's the kind of thing where people can call in and talk. So in the middle of our discussion, the Jesus movement was on at that time, the early days of the Jesus movement, and we're talking about Christian life, and a girl called in, and this is what she said, I used to be into Jesus, you know, some months back, but it just didn't work for me, and I'm out of it now.

I just dropped right out of the whole scene, that's what she said. And my pastor friend, who was all, you know, prime for, came zeroing in, and he gave her the big three. Aha, he said, you are not reading your Bible.

See, that means this is food, right? If you don't eat it, you die. So that's an obvious one, he shot on that. She said, oh yes, I was.

I read it every day. I studied it with friends. That was a problem.

I knew what the Bible said, but it wasn't true for me. So he took the second one. You were not praying, he said.

Yes, I was, she said. We prayed all together. I didn't get very many prayers answered.

So there's, the other one was fellowship, you know, church fellowship. Well, you weren't in fellowship. Yes, she said, and most of my friends have dropped out too.

Now, there's only one left, and it was tithing. And I was sitting listening to this, and see, in the back of my mind was this thing. And I said, can I have that? I said, honey, let me ask you a question.

Did anybody ever explain to you about repentance? She said, uh, repentance. Well, I heard the word. So did anybody ever explain to you what it meant? She said, no.

And I gave a little amplification of what we want to do now. Only took a couple of minutes. She broke down and she wept.

She said, I never heard that. Nobody ever told me that. And I said, well, cheer up.

You didn't leave Christianity. You never made it in the first place. I said, isn't that wonderful? God hasn't failed you.

Some preacher may have failed you by not telling you the truth, but God loves you. And she got saved over the phone, see. And in the front, the bank, you know, 800 people calling.

You could, it was like opening a can of worms. I saw a weird movie once called the Monolith Monsters. It's about a bunch of rocks that took over the world.

Crazy movie. Well, these are rocks that kill, you know. We could call this another horror story from the Bible.

But you know, I get embarrassed sometimes when in festivals and stuff like that. Beside a guy like Nicky Cruz, you know. Hell, Nicky Cruz, he was the head of this gang and he killed 50 people.

And beat their heads in with garbage cans. And his mother was into witchcraft. And yeah, my mother was just an ordinary lady.

And I never had a gory testimony. I was going to write a book as a follow-up to Dave's cross and a switchblade called The Cross and the Butter Knife. And instead of 12 angels from hell, 12 angels from church, which were just ordinary kids that even got saved and were able to be used.

I smoked once. I let the filter in. I didn't know any different.

I drank a lot of lemonade, milk and stuff like that. And in drugs. I was a chemist.

I was a research chemist. And trying to be a good research chemist. And it never occurred to me you could eat those things.

I worked with them all that time. I took great precautions to keep them out of me. And I found out, you know, years later people ate those things.

Astonishing. So, and you can tell by looking at me, I never would have made a good hell's angel or anything. I put a chain around my neck.

I couldn't have got off my motorbike. So, I was envious, you know, at people who had gory testimonies. Could stand up there with a bolt through the head and say, this is where the 45 Magnum went through, you know.

And I rode with Bonnie and Clyde. And you know, I was embarrassed. But I don't care anymore.

You know why? Because I found out that it's a harder thing to get saved from these kind of rocks than it is to get saved from the other kind of thing. Because when you're bad and you know it, it's easier to get saved than when you're bad and you don't. See? So, we're going to look now at those, at the rest of this story.

And we're going to ask this question. What do those rocks mean? Obviously, the rocks, they are the things that first created the problem. All right.

Now, what is it that actually kills this seed? Let's put it on the board and we'll see what happens. Okay. Here's the seed.

You saw, the plant shoots up. It's favorite song is Shallows of Blessing. What is the characteristics of the roots? They go out and they're shallow.

So, here's a characteristic of a person on rocky ground. Their sustenance is always found somewhere else. It's not where they are.

It's always somewhere else. There's some meeting. I've got to be at this meeting.

See? Do you know why? Because their survival depends on the rain. They have not tapped the streams underground. Their survival depends on the rain.

If there's no rain, there's no life. They're finished. Their roots do not go down.

They go out. And the characteristic is the running around this thing. These are what a pastor would call a church hopper.

You know, wherever the heavy anointing is, you know, that's where we're going. Well, pastor, sorry we won't be here because you're boring. We're going off to where the great river... See, do you see what I'm saying? They don't have roots down.

They have roots out. Can somebody tell me just offhand Psalm 1, a little bit of it? Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor sits in the seat of the scornful, nor stands in the way of the sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night, and he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. He brings forth fruit in his season.

His leaf doth not wither. Why? Because he's not dependent on the rain. It's by a river.

So we're going to look at the sun. And here is the story. This thing looks fine, man.

There's rain coming down, glory. Rain stops, as it does in Texas. And out comes the sun.

It's all this ultraviolet and infrared. Top layer of mud dries up, bakes hard. Finished.

No more plant. Dead as a doornail. Now, I'm not sure of the whole gamut of what these rocks represent, but I think we can have a guess by looking now at Jesus' explanation.

Let me just ask a question before we go there. What does the sun do to a normal, healthy plant? It helps it grow. Have you ever seen a plant that's been cut off from the sun, where you try and grow something under a rock or under... What color is it? It's white.

It's no chlorophyll. It's sickly. You can just pull the thing off.

It's dead straight away. See? A sun helps normal plants grow. Now, I want you to give me a list of what the sun represents.

These may surprise us. Matthew 13, 20 to 21 first. I just want a list.

First, this is Jesus' explanation now. So in order, tell me the characteristics of the soil that did not make it. And don't forget the first one.

One we've done before, but we'll do it again. He hears the word. Question, is this person religious or irreligious? Again, religious.

We're not talking about the total pagan person that doesn't know anything about anything. These people have heard the word. Secondly, they what? They immediately... Notice the stress on this word again the Holy Spirit puts in.

He said, oh boy, look at the... See? No questions, no debate, no struggles, no dying. Just, oh great. Now, here is a scary one.

Isn't that a scary one? How many of you heard this? Would you like to receive Christ? I've heard it. You'll receive Christ, Jack. That's it.

Here's people who received the word. And didn't make it. Why? Nobody dealt with the rocks.

I believe this. It's possible to receive a picture of Christ or something. To have some kind of experience without those rocks being dealt with.

And to go on the strength of that topsoil fertilizer. But when your roots don't go down into the character of God. And we'll look at those rocks in a second.

And make some stabs at guesses at what they may be. I got an idea. Then we have this scary thing.

Can you add anything else to that word receives it? Hey, this is no legal thing. Don't we make a test of joy as a test of the genuine article? I mean this guy, he probably goes, oh glory. See it was, oh glory.

It's 15 marks for that one. You know, he really made it. Spurgeon talked about those who were healed before they were hurt.

Who'd been in effect sewn up before the surgery had taken place. And he made a strong warning against the danger of counterfeit conversion. In a message on this stony ground.

And he said, they have strong reason to suspect. Whether sovereign grace has ever laid their hand on them. Talked about all the kinds of joy that can come with a false experience.

And the real test is when the sun comes out. Not when the rain comes down. When the sun comes out is the real test.

Can you tell me now what that sunshine rocks combination represents? What's that sun represent? Let's write them all down. Persecution. Another one.

Affliction. Temptation. Give me another one.

Testing or tribulation. All right. Ladies and gentlemen.

I introduce you to the things that will be of great blessing to you on your Christian night. That will help you grow if your roots are right. Persecution.

Affliction. Temptation and tribulation. Don't we in our 20th century take the longest route to get away from these things? We pray God will deliver us from persecution.

That's nice. I mean, nobody in their right mind looks for that. Oh God, I'm aching to be persecuted.

I really want to be afflicted. And I haven't been tribulated for at least a week. I mean, we're not Christian sadists or masochists here.

We're talking about is that these things come in any reality. The sun, the same sun that kills some plants, helps others grow. And a lot depends on those rocks.

I ran into some heavy-duty philosophical thought forms in university. And it didn't blow me away. Because I met Jesus Christ.

And I was rooted in him, not in a culture. Rooted in him. But what we're saying is that these things don't have to kill you.

They should strengthen you. I hear stories, this young man went into university. And there he ran into some very heavy-duty philosophical thought forms that blew him away.

I ran into some heavy-duty philosophical thought forms in university. And it didn't blow me away. Because I met Jesus Christ.

And I was rooted in him, not in a culture. Rooted in him, not in a doctrinal thought form. I was rooted in him, not in a philosophy about him.

Bring on these things now. They will come. They'll come to the Western world.

They come to third world countries. And that's where they're having a revival. They come to the communist nations where there are Christians there.

And that's where revivals are happening. And we in the West have tried to avoid all of these. It's nasty things.

Now, we can pray like Jesus said, lead us not into temptation. Pray that on the day you, you know, escape this, there's going to be bad times. So pray that you're not around on that time.

That's fine. But if it comes, and it comes to you, what happens to your Christianity? Our whole eschatology, our thought forms about the second coming. I don't know whether Jesus is going to come before some tribulation or after.

I frankly don't care. I'm ready now. As far as Chinese Christians in the early days, and some of the Russian Christians in Iron Curtain country, and some of the Latin American Christians are already going through the Great Tribulation.

What scares me is that people have an escape thought form. God will get them out of this stuff. I pray that he'll get me out and get ready in case he doesn't.

How about you? Leonard Ravenhill tells a story of a Chinese pastor who escaped in that first terrible thing where over two million people were killed in the early radical days. The Red Guards and all that went through the country. This pastor got out, escaped, and he came back into his, into his pastorate after the whole thing was over and looked for his church.

So, indigenous Chinese church. He finally found a couple of his deacons working out in the field. They wouldn't talk to him.

They wouldn't even talk to him. And eventually he got a guy that used to be almost a right-hand man of his, and he said, why in the world, what is wrong? And the guy said to him, you're a false prophet. What did he say to him? He said, you told us that terrible persecution was coming, that this and that.

You said that Jesus would come and take us out of this. As far as we're concerned, our, you know, Christianity is dead as our children are. So, I just say this to you.

We, we have to be rooted not in a culture, not in a thought form, not in a philosophy about God, but in Jesus himself. He's the heart. He's the rule.

He's the center of that thing. Now, let's have a guess at these rocks. What do you think? Let me look at these with you.

This is what tests the plant. Do you have an idea of what some of these rocks might be? Yeah, yeah. There's some form of selfishness.

What does persecution affect? Physical body. All right. Now, how many of you believe that God wants us to have a healthy physical body or a healthy image in society? All right.

What is that called? You're, most of you are Americans. Certain people are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. And I believe if we look at these things, we'll find they are threats on good things.

Not, not bad things, but good things. Ah, temptation is a test. Temptation is a suggestion to gratify a legal desire in an illegal way or amount.

See? How many think that sin can be fun? Put your hands up. Well, it is fun. Nobody would sin if it wasn't fun.

You think it is. Bible talks about the pleasures of sin are but for a season. Don't you think that means that there's got to be some fun in it? You don't go, I've got to sin again today.

It's all sin easily. You like sinning. The end product of it isn't that far out.

Well, it is pretty, it puts you pretty far out when you're finished. But sin does have pleasure in it. The scripture says it does.

It's just the end of it. It's only for a season, only lasts a while. That's when you get the sting at the end of the thing.

Tribulation. Real trouble. Persecution.

Affliction. Things that are actually done to you. These are all violations of rights, of good things.

So my number one suggestion, it might be a hard philosophy. It may be some unbroken idea or thought form. But I'm convinced that the major rocks in the United States and North America and a great chunk of the rest of our Western world is on good things.

It's on rights. So here is what the Bible does not say. I am the Lord your God.

You shall have no other bad gods before me. That's the way we read it, aren't we? It is not bad things but good things that hurt the Christian church in the Western world. Bad things everybody recognizes, you know.

Pastor gets caught in immorality with the secretary of the, you know, or the organist. Everybody goes, ah, gasp and kicks him out of the church. They would do that in a Rotary Club or Lions or something.

That's just a moral thing. That's not necessarily Christian. What about good things that get in the way of God? Here is an old parable or a little statement that people have said.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions. Right? You all heard that one? The road to hell is paved with good intentions. And as I mentioned, Dorothy Sayers pointed out, we think that means a good intention weakly pursued.

Somebody was going to get around to getting saved but they never did it. You know, like one day I'll, like Felix, you know, I'll hear of this matter again some later time. That's what we think.

But the original intent of that parable is not just that at all, that little saying. It means this. The road to hell is paved with good intentions, stubbornly and obstinately pursued against that which God wants in your life.

Remember we used, you ever heard it said, the good is the enemy of the best? You have no idea how profound that statement can be sometimes. A good thing, sitting in the place of God, is an idol. Now let's get practical.

Let's ask some hard questions about the way we preach today, the way we minister today to people, the way we go to lead people to the Lord and stuff like this. Now I have a little quote here. Let's see if I can find it.

It's called, Let's Stop Cashing In on Converts. Suppose Saul of Tarsus had been converted in, let's say, 1982 on U.S. 60 en route to Denver. Would his conversion experience have been allowed to develop until he became the mightiest exponent of Christian doctrine the church has ever known? Let's see.

No sooner would the word of such a dramatic newsworthy conversion have hit the wires of the press associations, then staff for People magazine, theater and TV news cameramen, feature writers and radio producers would have descended in Denver and in droves. They wouldn't have traveled alone either. Alongside them, striving manfully to keep pace, would have been representatives of most evangelical radio, TV programs, gospel rallies or youth movements of national consequence in America.

When the scales fell from Brother Saul's eyes, he'd have seen his room jammed with these people. The man from Christian Star magazine contending for an exclusive feature against the associate editor of Time, the program director of the heavenly light TV hour, trying to outtalk the agent from Meet the Press. Oh, that's incredible.

Ananias over in the corner serving as Saul's agent lining up the contracts. Before the first sunset of Saul's new life, he would have been scheduled for appearance on every Christian TV and radio network that could manage to land him. In the shortest possible time, he would have found himself booked for months or even years in advance as the headline attraction at gospel rallies all over Christendom, evangelical crusades, youth movements, even Bible conferences.

See the posters. Top rabbi tells how he turned to Christ. Here, a world-famous Jew preached Jesus.

Saul of Tarsus, converted Pharisee, preaching his famous sermon from Sanhedrin to the Savior. Let our morning paper carry the story that Gloria Goldilocks, top star of singer, screen and radio, has got religion, as they put it. Within the week, the same paper will announce her forthcoming appearance in the nationwide Pearly Gates revival hour for her affiliation with the atomic age gospel team.

We're no respecter of persons either. Big league baseball players, dance band leaders, bootleggers, kingpins of crime. Any of these will do just so their name is big enough to draw well.

And of course, so the conversion seems real. Please don't misunderstand. Each time any celebrity from show business, politics or murder incorporated sincerely calls for the Lord, on the Lord for salvation, we feel like out shouting the very angels.

The problem is our habit of propelling these converted celebrities into the foremost ranks of evangelistic Christianity long, long before they've been shown to be spiritually qualified to be there. Why did our girl, Gloria, get picked for that Pearly Gates hour, that gospel team? Because they wanted a spirit-based message she was capable of bringing? Or the headline value of Gloria Goldilocks, former star? Exposition of the scriptures or exploitation of the celebrity? Now you tell me what our culture is doing to these young people that, or the young Christians that do get saved from these situations, and I'll show you why they die quickly. We do not deal with rites.

We do not tell people to lay down their lives. We don't tell them to die. We tell them to consecrate.

Most of you know Barry McGuire. You know his background. You know something of his, we'll say, fame in his death style, the past and all the different things that he was involved in before he became a Christian.

I was privileged to be in the first week that Barry ever was a Christian. A couple of young people from McGarvey Force, an early revival out in Reedley, California, met Barry. And one was only saved two weeks, and the other one was only 18 years old.

They were two young people. They were testifying in a church, and God had been dealing with Barry up to the point of him surrendering to God. And he'd come up because an uncle of his had asked him to come up to that town and told him that he'd become a Christian.

Barry, at that point, had realized he was lost, and he didn't know how to get saved. He'd been reading the Bible through the New Testament. He'd got up to the Book of Romans.

In the middle of a party, he realized he was living in the Book of Romans. He looked around the wall, and all of his friends' pictures were up on the wall. It was Janice Joplin, and it was Otis Redding, and it was Jimi Hendrix, and it was Jimi Morrison of the Doors.

And they're all up there in a row around him, and his picture was up there too. And he looked, Otis Redding dead. Janice Joplin dead.

Jimi Morrison dead. Brian Jones of the Stones dead. Dead, dead, dead.

And that was him. Next on the list. And when you're reading through the Book of Romans, and it talks, you know, Romans 1, it talks about what people look like when they've abandoned God.

And he's sitting there looking in the middle of that. He just freaked out. And then he got that letter from his uncle.

Dear Barry, I know you're not going to understand this, but I just met Jesus. Amen. That was it.

Barry jumped when he leaves Hollywood, dumps everything, and goes out to find somebody who met Jesus. Comes into a church, and it was a boring service. The church was deader than some of the people who just left.

But his uncle had invited him there, and he came in the back, and he said, oh no, this is exactly the way I thought it was. And then these two kids, just fresh out of that revival, had been asked to testify in the church this morning. They stood up, and God spoke to them, and said, see that guy in the back? I'm dealing with him.

You give everything to him. They got up and talked. Barry came up afterwards.

He said, you really know Jesus, don't you? And they said, yes. And you need to know him, too. He said, how do I do that? They said, you come tonight, and we'll show you.

When he came that night, and caused the conversation, they said, what do you do? He said, well, I'm a musician. Do you know what they said? What do you think they would have said? Oh, really? Glory, what do you play? You know, we got a lousy band. We need good bass guitarists there.

Oh, you're a singer. Praise God. What have you done? You know what they said? You're a musician.

Uh-huh. You ready to lay that down and never sing again? He went, what? He said, that's the only thing I can do. They said, good.

Are you ready to die? Are you ready to lay that whole thing down? He said, oh, I don't know about that. They said, when you're ready to do that, you're ready to do anything God asks you at all. You just want Him more than anything else in the world, then He'll save you.

Now, that is not putting conditions on God. That's only stating what God says. If you don't repent, if you don't turn, you're not going to live.

That's not doing good things in order to be accepted by God. It is being willing to die. It's coming to the cross of Christ and letting that cross X you out.

Here's what A.W. Tozer said on the cross. The cross is a radical thing. It's the most revolutionary thing to ever appear among man.

The cross of Roman times knew no compromise. It never made concessions. It won all its arguments by killing its opponent and silencing him for good.

It spared not Christ, but slew him the same as the rest. He was alive when they hung him on that cross and completely dead when they took him down six hours later. That was the cross, the first time it appeared in Christian history.

The cross affects its ends by destroying one established pattern, the victims, and creating another pattern, its own. Thus it always has its way. It wins by defeating its opponent and opposing its will upon him.

It always dominates. It never compromises, never dickers or confers, never surrenders a point for the sake of peace. It cares not for peace.

It cares only to end its opposition as fast as possible. With perfect knowledge of all this, Christ said, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. So the cross not only brings Christ's life to an end, it ends also the first life, the old life of every one of his true followers.

This and nothing less is true Christianity, though we cannot but recognize the sharp divergence of this conception from that held by the rank and file of evangelicals today. We must do something about the cross, and one of two things only we can do, flee it or die on it. And if we should be so foolhardy to flee, we shall by that act put away the faith of our forefathers and make of Christianity something other than it is.

Then we shall have left only the empty language of salvation. The power will depart with our departure from the true cross. Now, isn't that what we have today? This was written over 50 years ago.

Isn't that what we have today? The language without the power, the words without the reality? I have strong feelings about this, because remember I told you in previous session, I got saved not by giving up bad things, but God dealt with me on a good thing, a career. I've loved since I was a little kid of eight years old. I wanted to be a chemist.

And I would have been willing to do anything God asked me to do, as long as it wasn't that, give up chemistry. I only wanted to do three things in my life, never travel, never meet people, and be a chemist. So I'm a failure.

Can you imagine what I felt like when God, you know, if he'd said, go to Africa as a Christian chemist, I would have gone, fine. He said, I want you to lecture in universities and throw my name in every now and then, so you know that Christians can be heavy duty in science. Talk about organic radicals and, oh, incidentally, I'm saved too, just in case any of you think.

What did he do? He came to me and he said, you want to follow me? Then lay your life down. I want you to say goodbye to your career. Ah, I see now.

Is this really God? I just want to be an ordinary Christian, not super Christian, not missionary type Christian, not evangelist pastor Christian. I just want to be ordinary Christian. This is ordinary Christian.

You see that? Don't we make two kinds of Christian now? Those who just made it by giving up their bad things, and then the heavy duty ones who, you know, sort of, well, I'm making extra sacrifices. I'm also going to give up some good things. See that? What is this? You add something to Christianity to mean the name of Christ.

Christianity is Him living through us. He is Lordship ruling us. Why do I feel so strongly about this? When I first became a Christian, I got saved like that, but I listened.

You know, what do you do when you first get saved and you feel God's called you to minister? Well, you get ears as big as Mr. Sparks in Star Trek. You sit in the front row of everything and you write down everything anybody says, right? Hey, that's a heavy thing. Oh, boy, that's a great.

You write it down. You have volumes of stuff, man, like this, and you digest it all, burp, you know, and then you re-spray it. Preach some of the heaviest sermons in the world.

I copied them from some of the best preachers. But the tragedy is, if you listen carefully, you will pick up sometimes what is being said too accurately. And what I found to notice in the first few years of my life is that what I preached was not the same as what had actually happened to me.

See, nobody explained repentance to me. I got saved by God solemnly dealing with my life and heart through my family and other things until the death of a very close friend just jarred me into a confrontation with eternity. I had a friend and he had a motorbike, brand new motorbike, and he'd been saving up for a year and a half to get this thing.

And I had a band at that time. I managed a rock band for three and a half years in New Zealand, which was the way I thought, you know, that's why you're lonely. You're not meeting people in the lab.

You know, you're hidden in there with smelly chemicals and you need to get out on weekends and meet people and, you know, adjust more to... See, chemicals were predictable, but people were not. I knew exactly what happened when you put two things together, but when you put two people together, totally different things happen each time. I never had any problems with sexual immorality in high school because I was too embarrassed to ask any girls out.

The first girl I ever asked out was in primary school. She was a polio cripple. I asked if she'd come out with me and she beat me over the head with her crutch.

Put me off talking to people for about three years. So, I'm busy preaching what I'm listening to. Accept the Lord and fit him into your life.

Give him a 30-day trial plan. You've done that? Why are you trying to learn? Look, you've got nothing to lose. There's a duplex in heaven.

And if you miss, you'll be dangling by your toe upside down for a hundred thousand years or more. Anyway, give it a try, man. What can you lose? Try him out for 30 days.

If you like it, fine. If not, go do something else. I'm sure you could fit him in, couldn't you? We wouldn't put it as crassly as that, would we? We'd just think it.

And what happens is the great God is stuck into the middle of man's rulership. We've got a little space for him, see? This is for eating. This is for sleeping.

This is for my work. This is for my play. I've got about five minutes here.

I could just about fit him in. You'd save between commercials. You've got about 30 seconds.

That's about enough. Big dynamite. Take care of that.

Takes care of eternity. Some Christians have this idea too, don't they? God wants this much of your life, you see. Oh, he can't have that.

That's already gone. That's mine. He's already got this much Bible study a day.

I had a church at least twice. And he wants another night? He wants a prayer meeting. Oh, for goodness.

Money! He can't have my money. That's our pizza philosophy. What slice do you want, God? You like pepperoni? I'll have the one with anchovies.

God doesn't want slices. He wants you. If he doesn't get the whole pie, he hasn't got you.

So problem. Problem was that here I'm standing here with my God. Nice band.

I mean, they weren't all drug addicts. They weren't all stoned out of their gourds. They were nice guys.

Nice career. Nice things. Not killing people every Sunday.

Nice. Five times a day in church on Sunday. That's as nice as you can get.

And my nice friend on his nice motorbike invited me to go for a ride with him. And the last moment I said no instead of yes. And he took off to meet.

He said, look, I'm just going out to visit my grandparents. Show them the bike. I'll be right back.

Why don't you come for a ride? We talked for 30 minutes about what he was going to do with his life. What I was going to do with my life. And I, last minute I said no because we still hadn't finished the practice.

I said maybe later on. He took off. I went back in.

It was early in the morning. Finished the practice. Never saw him.

Waited. Never saw him. Late that afternoon, my father came.

The newspaper office just down the road. And he pulled out this new newspaper that had just come off the press. He said, you see this? And they're printed in red.

Last minute. Stop press news. How a young man had left my hometown in Manurewa, Auckland, New Zealand.

He'd gone around this blind bend heading out towards his grandparents' place. He rode in like the back of his hand. And a kid who was drunk in a stolen car.

Came hammering into the corner at 100 miles an hour on the wrong side of the road. He got it down to about 60. But he came right around on the wrong side of the road just in time.

He met a guy coming around the corner on a motorbike at 60. 120 mile an hour combined impact. Put the two ends of the bike pasted together.

Flipped it in the air and blew it to bits. And when I read there. Saw the name of one of my closest friends.

I was the last guy in the world to talk to him. And we were gonna go and do these things, see? And suddenly God spoke to my heart. What is your life? It's like a mist.

It's here and then it's gone. And on that day, I realized. You got a choice, boy.

Eternity's opened up for you. Either follow God with your whole heart. Or you just go and leave you alone.

You do your own thing. And I made a choice that day. I lost a career.

I lost my best friend who was also in the band. I'm not the guy that was killed on the bike. But the guy was a drummer in our band.

After I got saved, that was it. But I'll tell you what. I don't talk about how hard it was to be a Christian.

My best friend is a drummer still. He's a drunk, too. He lives in New Guinea and he's still drumming.

Still got his God. Another friend of mine who was also in chemistry like me. Wanted to do what he wanted to do.

And he got a girl pregnant. First year in university. He had to drop out of university.

Lost his career. The only neat thing about it is about 15 years later, he got saved. And I saw him a couple of years ago when I was home.

And just say, let's quit at this point. I'm going to pick up this study on rights and then shift into the next series.

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