

Soil, Root, and Fruit

Gospel According to Luke

By Ken Wimer

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Bible Text: Luke 8:4-15

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Shreveport Grace Church

2970 Baird Road

Shreveport, LA 71118

Website: www.shrevegrace.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/shreveportgracech

I want to invite you to look with me in your Bibles to Luke 8. We've been studying through the gospel according to Luke and the last time that we were in this chapter, we considered who is the sower and who is the seed and today, if the Lord willing, we're going to consider what is the ground, what is the root, and what is the fruit. That's pretty simple. Soil, root, and fruit. When I say that, what do you think of? Being a farmer. Planting. And it's part of life. But our Lord used common, everyday illustrations to teach us of things pertaining to his kingdom and I daresay that if we've grown up in a city environment and we're used to just going to the grocery store and kind of picking out what you want and taking home and cooking it, we don't get an appreciation so much of what it takes to grow food and how the Lord provides in getting it to our table. We probably ought to pause more and consider it. We just tend to sit down and once it's fixed, "When we gonna eat?" But think about areas of the world where it takes toil and sweat to bring it, to grow it, and bring it in.

So this particular parable would have been very clear and plain to those in Christ's day as they walked through fields, by fields, saw it. Agricultural society. All the years that I preached in Africa, I used to say, because they'd see me and they'd say, well, this is like a white man's gospel, and I would tell them, well, actually, when I study and read the culture of scripture, it's a whole lot closer to how you live than how I was raised. But it's not a matter of being educated into the truth. The Lord takes his word, he takes examples, and by his Spirit this word reveals the work of Christ. And so we're going to read this and I'm going to make a few comments here about what I believe the Lord is illustrating here. But let's begin here in Luke 8. You can see in verse 1 he was going from village to village preaching, and then verse 4,

4 And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: 5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. 6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. 7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. 8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare

fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Now that's the parable, but now is the interpretation. See, we don't have to go running to men's commentaries trying to figure out, okay, what's the Lord mean here? I've often said when people come in, sit down, and they've got a lot of questions, just sit and listen because we go through the scriptures verse by verse, and eventually, we're going to hit on your answer. Our problem is that we want to know immediately, okay, what's it mean, and the reason we want to know immediately is because then we want to draw a judgment as to whether we agree or not. If you're a teacher, you understand. You have students that come, they don't know you're supposed to be teaching them. So questions come up and really the questions are distractions because they want to take it another way and you just have to say, "Look, I'm here to teach. Both of us can't talk at the same time, so let's go forth." The Word has every answer, but it's in the Lord's time.

So his disciples, verse 9,

9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? 10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

This verse right here, verse 10, if the Lord will bring it home, it'll pull back the shades and open the light and let it in on everything we're seeing here about the parable of the sower and the seed, so we'll come back to it. But then he says,

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

Connect that with what we just read in verse 10, to others in the parable, that seeing they might not see, hearing they might not hear.

13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away [of trial, that's the word]. 14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. 15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Now, all of us have heard preaching on this particular portion, myself included. All of us, if we've ever tried to teach or preach from this particular portion, have probably preached it wrongly. I plead guilty. You know, you jump in on some things and you think, well, this is what it means, and you know, I've had people say, "Why don't you write a book?"

Well, once it's in print, you can never get rid of it. I don't know if any of us can ever say that at any one point, we got it. We like to think so but this word is like water. You know, driving back last night late, I got thirsty, had to get water. I wasn't going to say, "Well, I've been thirsty before, so I don't really need water, I got it." There's a thirst where there's life that the Spirit draws you again to the source, to the water.

Now, I'll tell you straight up the number one danger about this particular portion and when I say this, you'll nod your head and say, "Yeah, that's how we've heard it preached," is that what's being described here is different kinds of hearts, and you've heard messages on the stony ground here, the thorns, and all of that. What does that cause you to do? Look in here. "Do I have that kind of heart? Oh, no, Lord. I've had these unbelieving thoughts today and so it says I must be that one there that heard and received with joy but alas, there's that unbelief, so I must not be the Lord's." And what does it do? It sends you into a spiral. Because why? You're inspecting fruit. You're inspecting the root but my question is, who made you the inspector? You ever see fruit inspect itself? Maybe on a commercial, you'll hear someone animates it and hear one avocado talking to the other there on the stand or the tomatoes or whatever, but no, fruit is passive. Fruit is not something we produce.

Everything in this is being acted upon, if you stop and think about it. It begins with, as we saw last time in verse 5, a sower went forth to sow his seed. Now, we looked at this last time because there are many that say, "Well, that's the preacher." No. The sower that went forth to sow and his seed, as we saw last time, is Christ. And when it says here in verse 11, "Now the parable is this, the seed is the word of God," again, most people read that and think the written word but the Word of God is Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Now, what I've just told you should set up the rest of this parable to give understanding to those that are the Lord's. Remember the Lord spoke in parables like he said that those that are without, seeing they might not see and hearing they might not hear. The Lord said when he came to this earth, he was going to bring a sword of dividing in one household, that this thing of salvation and of Christ's work is not by right or entitlement. It's by grace. And just as the sower sows the seed, so the sower determines where it's cast but at the same time, the sower is not caring about where it lands for this one reason, the sower being Christ already knows that good ground that he himself has prepared.

You think about a field, how does it become a good ground? Dirt is dirt. You know, when it says over here in verse 15, "But that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart." We looked at the word good previously. It's the word we get God. Good. God. So an honest, that word doesn't mean sinless, but it's a heart that the Lord has made transparent. And I will tell you, a sinner in whom the Spirit of God has been pleased to do a work of grace, that heart the Lord has made transparent. That's one like the publican that dared not even look heavenward but beat his breast and said, what? "Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner." The one thing that those that are without cannot confess is that they're sinners. They hide behind their religion. They hide behind their profession. They hide behind their doing.

So even in this parable, the Lord is making a distinction of different types of hearers, not hearts. Now, the question is, how do you hear? I think that's something that could be evaluated. When I hear the word of Christ being preached, does it draw me to him or does it revolt me? Because Christ said, "Of all that the Father has given me, he would lose nothing." So that already tells me something about this parable that if it fell on that hard place and they didn't believe or even if it fell on this ground that seemingly there was rejoicing for a while, like in Christ's day when many followed him because of the miracles and other things, and yet when he began to teach them who it is that could truly come unto God and it would be none other than those that the Father had given him and that he was drawing and for whom he would pay the debt, what happened? They became offended and they went away.

So if you can be thinking in terms of not a heart but a hearing and not just physical ears. There's a hardness in hearing and again, you think about children. You say something, they hear you with a physical ear but you've got to repeat it. They hear you with a physical ear but how do you know they've heard when there's that acting upon what they've heard? And so I believe this is what our Lord is describing here in this parable because begin with, for example, verse 4, "When much people were gathered together and were come to him out of every city." Now if this was modern day evangelism, so-called, you'd have an evangelist saying, "Isn't the Lord at work. Look how many people showed up." I can't tell you how many people in this world, natural-minded people, judge the success of a church or a congregation based upon how many cars are in the parking lot. And if that were the standard, don't you know that Noah was a failure because there were only eight souls saved out of an entire world. But what we know is everyone was saved that was supposed to. There was a lot of room in the ark, just like there's plenty of room in heaven, but there's no vacancies because the Lord said so.

He said, "Of all that the Father has given me, I'll lose nothing." You say, "What about this one over here that's listened for a while and was gone?" That was purposed. Why did the Lord hear in verse 4, you know, and you define our Lord's pattern in teaching. He didn't get all excited about crowds. In fact, when there was a crowd, that's where he cranked it up, "Let's just make sure we understand why you're here and why I'm here." And as he did make it plain, what did they do? They went their way and thereby showed by that going away. See, that's one of the most dangerous things. I don't have to sit here and inspect this heart and try to figure out, okay, what level of heart is it? Am I hearing or am I not? When I hear this word set forth, Christ and his death and what he's accomplished, is this heart drawn to rejoice in him? If so, there's life.

Remember what the Lord said to his disciples there in John 6 after they'd all gone away. What did he say? He turned to them and said, "Will you also go away?" And they said, "To whom shall we go? You are the one that has the words of eternal life." When the Lord said to his disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" Everybody had an opinion. Just like today, everybody has an opinion about Christ. If you don't believe it, right after worship service, if you want, just go down door to door down this street, knock on the door and ask them one question, "What do you think of the Lord Jesus Christ? I'm just

here taking a poll." Get them talking. How many different? I counted them one time because I was thinking it would be good maybe just to go put some bulletins in each door but there's 21 houses right here. So 21 houses, how many different opinions do you think you'd have? 21. Which one would be the right one? Well, it would be if I knocked on a door and found one of the Lord's, that maybe they might be just down here in this house and never knew that here was a place where they could come here of Christ and Christ alone, drive by it every day. And some of you, that was the case. You saw a building drive by, walking around here, all of a sudden, the Lord draw you in. Wow. This hunger and thirst.

You see, it's not us doing it. This is the Lord's work. But that's what I want you to see here. This is a dividing that the Lord is doing. He's the sower. We saw last time that when it says the seed is the word of God, what do you do with the seed? It's sown in the soil. So here's the first point about the soil. The soil, the field, Christ said in Matthew 13 is, what? The world. It's not a heart. It's the world. So as these multitudes are coming to Christ now and his popularity is beginning to grow because they're seeing miracles and other things that he's doing and people are running to him, what's he doing? He's separating the wheat from the chaff like any good farmer would. When that field is being cultivated, Christ said that, he said to his disciples, "The field is white unto harvest." That's what he told them. But it wasn't a plea like we got to get people going so we don't lose the harvest. No, he's the Lord of the harvest. He's going to bring in everyone that he came to save. I can tell you that.

What kind of good shepherd is it that loses a sheep? The hirelings do. That's what he distinguished himself. He said, hirelings, when they see the wolf, they run and so sheep are lost. Who are the hirelings? Religion, religionists, preachers. You sit down and listen to them talk around the table sometime. Long ago, I stopped going to these so-called preacher fellowships because all they can do is sit there and talk about this one, that one, he came, he left, he came, left and they're passing judgment. I know this, that if any were in our hands, we'd lose them all. But not one that the Lord Jesus Christ came to save will he ever lose.

He's the good shepherd. He's the chief shepherd. And the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. Don't you know if you went to a store to buy something and got home, I don't care if it's just a little bag of bananas, got home and realized you left it back at the store and you'd already paid for it, what's your thought? "I've got to go back there and get that." Why? "Because I paid for it. It was the reason I paid for it." You know, thankfully our Lord never has to go back and get. He's always leading his sheep. He's always going before. He's doing the leading. He's doing the drawing. He's doing the saving. He's doing the finding, the carrying back into the fold, every one of them. Those are his sheep.

We've got that verse on our sign out here this week in John 10 where the Lord said, "Ye believe not." Why? "Because you're not of my sheep." He didn't say, because you don't believe, you're not of my sheep. He said, the reason you don't believe is because you're not of my sheep. Now you take that and relate it to this parable. When it talks here about the rock, don't you suppose the farmer knows the rock is there? And when it talks there

about the thorns, don't you know the farmer knows there's thorns? But what are these? And again, it's the hearing. Christ, verse 1 of chapter 8 talks about him going from village to village preaching. He's sowing the seed in the sense that he's the sower and he's the seed. What did he, when he went about preaching, what did he preach? Well, we saw that in verse 1, the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. The only good news, that's what that word glad tidings, that's the word we get the gospel, he was preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. Well, what was he preaching? He's the King. He's the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament prophecies and types and pictures and promises.

Back there in Psalm 2, it was already declared God said, "I have set my king on my holy hill." He didn't say I shall, I have. This is an eternal decree whereby God has purposed to honor his Son, establish him as the king, given him, what does a kingdom have but subjects, given him that people over which he will rule and reign, but being a holy and just God, guess what kind of people they are? Sinners. God can't just look the other way. So in the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of woman, made under the law to do what? Redeem them that were under the law. Not set the law aside, but redeem. He came to earn and establish a righteousness that is satisfactory to God alone, that God might be just and justified. Not everybody. You hear people that they think that God's trying to save everybody. I'll tell you, if that's true, then that God is a huge failure. But the truth is, he's not trying to save everybody. He's not even trying to do anything, even to use that term. It's not, God never tried anything. We try because we don't know the end. He knows the end from the beginning. He acts and he's immovable in his acting according to what he's purpose. That purpose never changes and thereby he accomplishes the salvation of his people.

So this, the seed is Christ, the sowing is the word but as we saw last time, what does the seed do? It falls in the ground. And here's where people get in trouble, again, because they think, okay, that's the ground of this heart. No. The field is the world. Why did Christ come into this world? It wasn't just to live a life of example for us to follow. If that were the case, then the seed would just stay on the surface and, you know, people come by and, oh, there's a seed, pick it up and carry it with them and everybody's got their seed. People today like to talk about the seed of faith, sow the seed of faith and it's something you do. That's not here.

As we saw last time, the seed, what did Christ say about his death? "Except the seed fall in the ground and," what? "Die it won't bring forth fruit." But when it does, it brings forth fruit, what? 100 fold? Some 30, some 60, some 100? How does that parallel to the good ground when it says here, verse 15, that on the good ground, that's that ground that God, if you want the good, God prepared, because God is good. He's the only one that's good. Remember when Christ addressed that ruler, he called him good master. He called him good master, but at the same time, he didn't believe he was God and what did our Lord say? "Why are you calling me good? There's only one good, and that is God." He wasn't denying that he was God. He was just putting it back on this, you know, "Which is it? You can call me Master, but when you say good Master, you are actually confessing and saying exactly who I am. But do you believe that?"

And so, good ground it says are they that in an honest and good heart, and again, just like God-prepared ground, God-prepared heart, having heard the word but here it's in a sense different than just physical hearing, hearing with the heart. Having heard the word, what? Keep it. What word did they hear? Well, Christ is the word of God, so having heard the word, heard Christ. Christ said, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me." And that's the Spirit's work of grace to call out those that are his. But that seed that was sown in the ground is his death, his burial, his resurrection, his ascension on high, all that comprises the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation.

And they follow him. They're drawn out of tradition. You don't find these falling among the thorns or the hard place. This is ground that the Lord has prepared and it says they hear the word and keep it. That word "keep," I can't tell you how many times you'll hear preachers that are works preachers coming up with a list now. "How are we going to keep the word here today? So let's get our list out. Let's post it on the refrigerator. Let's make sure we're doing everything we should be here in order to make sure we're one of these." This word "keep" is something you do with what is precious to you. I daresay that every one of us in our homes have a keepsake. You ever heard that word? That if I were to go in there and just kind of rustle through and pick this thing up and start tossing it in the air and didn't think anything of it, you'd come running out and say, "Look, that is precious." That's what this word "keep" means. It's not in a legalistic, "Oh, I better not forget." A keepsake is maybe an outward reminder, but it has significant meaning to your own heart because of the relationship, what's there.

When it says here, having the word, keep it. You know, the scriptures say to you who believe he is precious. Don't think in terms of sentimentality because again, our flesh is such that as soon as we hear these terms, we're going right back into, "Oh, how do I feel right now?" It doesn't have a thing to do with how you feel. Feelings come, feelings go, and feelings are deceiving. But to you who believe he is precious. Precious in this sense, the word means priceless. That's really what it means. There is no price that anybody could ever give you to buy it out of your hand. That's a keepsake. "I don't care whatever else they take, but they're not taking that." And somebody that doesn't appreciate it is going to look at you and say, "What kind of.. you wouldn't take a million dollars for it?"

But here again is the difference between a Jacob and an Esau when you come right down to it. Was Jacob's heart any better than Esau's? Not at all. When the scriptures say, "Jacob, have I loved and Esau have I hated," it wasn't because one was better than the other but there came a time when left to himself, because that's what it, you know, I hear people say all the time, "Well, why does God make all the choices?" You don't want him leaving you to yourself. Go back and read through scripture and find out those that the Lord has left to themselves. There came a time when Esau preferred that pot of porridge and that could be anything to the birthright and gave it up. Jacob, you talk about the conniving and everything, but you say, "Well, why was Jacob?" It was even before they were born. Paul said in Romans 9 that the Lord had already determined, the younger shall serve the elder. It was the Lord keeping him. You don't think he was a hunted man? That's why he ran when he found out how he'd gotten to this thing. But it was the Lord purposing it all along. And in his time, he brought him back. He was fearful of what Esau

might think, you know, and sent his whole entourage ahead of him but then he came. But who made Esau peaceable with him after all those years? It was the Lord directing that path.

That's what this is. This seed that is sown in the ground is Christ and his death. The preaching of Christ, the hearing of him is Christ and him crucified. I remember as the Lord first began to teach me, because you've got to remember, I sat in institutions and went through all the degrees to learn from professors on how to preach this book, but I was blind and when the Lord first began to open my eyes, after I'd been through all the so-called theological training and titles and all that, as the Lord began to open my eyes to see Christ here in this word, I remember asking a preacher that the Lord had taught, I said, "How do you distinguish in this word what pertains to Christ and what isn't?" And he stopped me and said, "There's no distinguishing. It's all about him." When you read the word of God, it's Christ. Don't be like that young man that was anxious to preach and he kept asking the older preacher to give him an opportunity to preach. So finally the older preacher said, "Okay next Sunday you preach." He studied, he prepared, he had his outline, Bible, he was ready. When he was asked to come up to the pulpit, he delivered his message and this young man's eye was all the time on that preacher and the preacher's had his head down. And after the service, the young man went back there like some preachers do and shake everybody's hands so the old man finally came up to him and the young man said, "What did you think about the message?" He said, "It was very weak." The young man was startled. He said, "Well, what was weak? Was it the preparation?" He said, "No, I can tell you put a lot of preparation into it." "Was it the outline?" "No, the outline, I could recite back to you the outline." "So was it the presentation, was it the application?" The old man kept shaking his head. He said, "Well, tell me, what was it?" He said, "You didn't preach Christ." And the young man said, "Well, Christ isn't in the text." And the old man said, "There's your problem, because he's in every text. And if you don't see him," he said, "get you out a little machete and cut your way to it, because he's there. If all you see is a forest, he's there."

You know, and all that the Lord used in my life. I tell you often, as the Lord was opening my eyes, and this is after I was already in Africa preaching as a so-called missionary, that I went back and started reading these scriptures like a little kid. You would have thought I hadn't been to school, and I hadn't. I understood a little bit about as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word. When you see that word "word," what word is it talking about? Christ. Milk. What was the Promised Land called? The land of milk and honey. It's a picture. It's not something you produce. It comes from an animal. It's the Lord's doing. But it's a picture of the riches of God's grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything is about him.

So again, it comes back to hearing. Be careful how you hear. He's the sower. He's sowing the seed. And this is talking about, I believe, primarily Christ coming and preaching his kingdom in this day and age. There's applications today, but you think about the different kinds of hearers that there were. Every one of them is described here. when it says there in verse 12, "those by the wayside." When you just hear "by the wayside," it means they're not in the way. Who's the way? It's Christ. They're not in Christ. So therefore, that

seed doesn't pertain to them. As he went about preaching and teaching, there were those that were there, but when it says, then cometh the devil, that word devil means adversary. I can't tell you how many people over the years have come and sat and listened, and they get a little bit excited about what they're hearing. They say, "You know, that's different." I was with an associate down in Lafayette on Friday night, we all went out to dinner afterward, and I've had opportunity to talk to him about, he's religious, I talked to him about how the Lord's taught me, and Mary and I were sitting there at the table and just out of the blue, I forget what we were talking about, but it was in this vein, he said, "You know what? You're unique." That's what he said, "You're unique." Now that's about like saying you're peculiar or you're odd but I'll take that as a compliment because I don't want to be with the masses just like these that after a certain while turned and left, went their way. Whether anybody else is following him or not, by his grace, I'm following him.

But I can't tell you how many people there have been that after they've heard, what's the first thing they say? "You know, I'm going to go talk to my pastor about this. "That's where you're in trouble because your pastor's going to be the devil that's going to come and take away that hearing. And I can't tell you how many people, there's a lady, I'm in Toastmasters, there's a lady that listens on the radio to the messages. She and her husband drive into their congregation and when I came and I gave some speeches, she was just digging, scratching, and finally, one day she said, "Are you on the radio?" Yeah. "We listen to you. I recognize your voice." And she said, "Your message is different. I'm hearing what you're saying about God's sovereign." She said, "In fact, in our Sunday school class, I referred to one of your messages just to try to orient the conversation that way based on what I'd heard you preach and," she said, "it started such a big discussion that finally the teacher said, okay, well, let's move on." That's the devil to say we're going to move on, that we're not going to hear this anymore.

But you notice it says, "and taketh away the word out of their hearts." Don't you suppose if it was one that was the Lord that you think a man could take that away or Satan could take it away? And there's the key right there, "lest they should believe and be saved." You know, the devil is God's devil. I know people get upset when you say that, but ask Job. The devil told the Lord, "The reason he doesn't curse you and die is because you've got a hedge about him." Satan had to ask permission of God to do anything, but even there the Lord put restrictions, "Do whatever, but you're not going to take his life." Why? "That's my life." He was one for whom the Lord Jesus Christ would come and pay the debt. He wasn't going to have him.

What did the Lord say to Peter? "Satan hath desired to sift you," that's important, "as wheat." There's many that the Lord has given over to be sifted as chaff but as wheat, what did the Lord say? "But I have prayed for you." You know, the Lord has begun to bring this home to my heart. When I get people coming to me and saying, "Ken, Pastor, would you pray for me because I'm going through this struggle and that?" You know, we can say, I can say, "Well, as the Lord directs, I'll pray," but you know what's more important is whether or not Christ is your intercessor. And I don't mean it facetiously, but if he has paid your debt, your worst problem has already been taken care of and he's not going to lose one for whom he's paid that debt.

Thank God that you're not among those that hear and an adversary takes them away, and you can go right on down there. This, when they hear, there's a physical hearing. They receive the word with joy. This is like in the the book of Ezekiel, the rattling of the bones. When the Lord told Ezekiel, go out there and preach to the valley of dead bones, there was a rattling of the bones. But what's the scripture say? No life. It wasn't until the life entered in that they stood up. And I fear there are many that have heard and received with joy. You can read John 6, multitudes followed him and the Lord said, "You don't even follow me because of the miracles. You follow me because I gave you bread." But then he immediately went to why he'd come. He said that no man can come unto me except the Father, to be given him of the Father, the Father drawn.

And you could read in John 6, somewhere around verse 66, "from that moment forward many of his disciples," these weren't true disciples, but these were kids showing up at class pretending to learn but really weren't there to learn, didn't like what they heard and started skipping school, decided we're out of here. It says "went away," and it says, "followed him no more." There's the fear. If you have anything to fear to be that hardened, because we all wander, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the one I love." Sheep wander. "All we like sheep have gone astray." Someone was telling me the other day something that I never thought of, but sheep are so dumb that they don't even know they're sheep. Well, ask a sheep if he's a sheep. That's where most people, you know, "Are you a sheep?" If I'm the Lord's I am. He'll determine the matter.

All I know is when I hear this word preached, my heart is drawn. Sometimes it's like an appetite, sometimes I'm really hungry, and sometimes I'm not. But you know what? Given enough time, I'm going to get hungry. We're not to judge our relationship with the Lord based on our appetite because if it were based on that, we'd all have to be cast into hell. It's not us holding onto the Lord. It's him holding on to us. It's him keeping us. Do you see that? Does that bring some comfort? It does me. As I began to look at this again in the context, compared to even how I've preached it before, I know someone's going to say, "Hey, I pulled up this old message of yours, and I remember when you went through and you were preaching different types of hearts." All right, I plead guilty. Give me that copy back. I'll burn it because all that does is getting us looking inward, when in reality where does faith look? Outward.

You know, John Bunyan struggled with this very point because of the upbringing which was very hard during... In fact, Pilgrim's Progress, when it says he fell into the slew of despond, that was expected. That was the preaching. If you don't get down in despondency and feel your sin and truly repent, so what are people doing? They're just laboring. But when you're laboring, you're not looking. And his testimony was, again, through the word, as he sat one day under a tree thinking about suddenly the Lord brought home the light that my righteousness is not in here, it's seated there in the heavenlies and if it's not there, then I have no righteousness. But that's why Christ came.

So, you know, when you start looking inward, you're in trouble. I'm in trouble. I read this word, I see what it says about the Lord Jesus Christ and who he saves and if the Spirit

will give me even eyes to see. It's like the man when the Lord first opened his eyes and asked him, "What do you see?" He said, "It looks like men like trees walking." What did the Lord do? Touched him again. We need that every time. I guarantee you, I do. Doesn't matter how many years I've been preaching Christ, I need him again today. I need him to open my eyes and never leave me to myself because if he does, there's a pretty good clue I never was his. The Lord didn't pay attention to the goats. In fact, that's what the whole parable is about. The good shepherd, he comes to the fold, which was a religious fold, everybody in the village put all their animals in there, but he called out those that were his. The rest he left and that's how he's working in this world.