

Associated with the Spirit but Not Born of the Spirit **sermonaudio.com**
True Church Conference 2020
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Bible Text: Hebrews 6:4-8
Preached on: Saturday, February 22, 2020

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Let's go back to Hebrews 6 this morning. I've been to a lot of True Church Conferences and hadn't these brothers preached the word to us? Good night. I'm just so blessed, so thankful and really incredible how the messages dovetail together.

Hebrews 6 is a text, as I told you earlier, the first session, that is, um, about lost professors of faith, about those who are probably active in the church but are not of the church, and he has a powerful way to illustrate this and let's look at the text together. Hebrews 6, we'll go down through verse 11. Hebrews 6:4,

4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. 7 For the ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; 8 but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and ends up being burned. 9 But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. 10 For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and still ministering to the saints. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end,

I confess to you that up to a few years ago, I held a quite simplistic view of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Usually when you hear somebody say that, they're gonna talk about getting into signs and wonders and miracles, well, I haven't gotten into that yet but, ah, don't plan to, but the fact that the Holy Spirit is a dynamic, creative person who is infinite and sovereign, I don't know, I just hadn't stopped to think about that. For example, and I'll just run through this super quick, just, in just a moment or two I jotted down some of the things the New Testament says about the variety of works of the Holy Spirit. On, on the day of Pentecost, um, men spoke with other languages and flames of

fire came upon their tongues. Ah, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus as a dove at his baptism. The early church performed signs and wonders and miracles. The Holy Spirit calls out apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor/teachers. The Holy Spirit restrains in the world. Demons were cast out by the Spirit of God. The Spirit helps us when the flesh is weak. The Holy Spirit anointed Jesus to preach. The Holy Spirit is, is given to those who ask the Father for him. Jesus said you had to be born of the Spirit to enter or see the kingdom of God. We worship in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives life. The Holy Spirit's like the wind. He brings power for ministry. He fills believers. He can be resisted. He gives gifts to believers. He produces unity among believers. And there's much more. Here's my point: he does more than three or four little simple things and he's not gonna allow us to put him in this little cookie cutter, ah, parameter and say that's what you do and that's all you can do.

So we come to this next session, I'm skipping some things just to hit on what I'm gonna call "Associated with the Spirit but Not Born of the Spirit." Associated with the Spirit but not born of the Spirit. We look at it there in our text, ah, in verse, ah, 4 again, the last phrase, "and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit." The word "partaker" there is a word that is commonly translated in the New Testament as "associated with or a companion." For example, in Luke 5:7 the men in the boat fishing, the apostles, they joined their partners in the other boat. They came alongside. They were just associated together. In Hebrews 1:9, ah, the angels are considered Jesus' companions. They're associated, they're around each other. Same Greek word again. Ephesians 5:7, we're not to be partakers with those who are participating in sin; not to run along with them. So I think that's exactly the way this word is used in this text.

Paul refers to those who have some association with the Holy Spirit but not yet born of the Spirit. Here is, um, a person who shares or participates in something with someone else. Now it can't be saying that they have a share of the Holy Spirit. He's a person. You don't chop him up. But it does mean they have some association with him. Now again, I believe this is above the natural revelation that we see in God revealing himself through our natural conscience and through creation. In 6:4 here, Paul does not use the common word that is used in the New Testament to those who are born again or who are converted by the power of the Holy Spirit. For example, in Ephesians 2, those who are saved are considered quickened or made alive in Christ. That's not the word, word he used here. In John 3, you're born again or born from above. In Romans 6:13, you're made alive from the dead. Ah, to the church at Sardis, the text says they have a name that they're alive but they are dead. So those are strong clear words and very very different words than what the author is using here in Hebrews 6:4.

I'm convinced it does mean that these are those who were associated with the Spirit's work, knew some of the benefits that he performs, yet were not truly converted, were not born of the Spirit. In fact, the Holy Spirit works in all unbelievers but not savingly. Now he may go ahead and do that if in his sovereign purposes he chooses to, and of course in our theology that would be in accordance with God's predestination and election of his own, but the Holy Spirit works in all men in some capacity but not savingly. So these men in this text, men, I say these church members in this text who are not yet saved, did

experience something of the Spirit's power and gifts, the knowledge he gives, the wisdom he gives, a type of faith that's less than saving faith, a temperance, a fear of God much like Cornelius, the Bible says he feared God. How did this unsaved man Cornelius fear God? The Spirit of God helped him to grasp, to be a reverence for the one true God, the God of Israel.

And then just a few examples. For example, Ahithophel. Ahithophel's counsel was considered by David and Absalom to be as if one inquired of the word of God. How did Ahithophel have this capacity to give this wisdom? The Spirit of God was enabling him. Saul. I know there's some debate about was Saul converted or not converted, but the things that are said here are not referring to a conversion. For example, 1 Samuel 10:9. It happened when he turned his back to leave Samuel, God changed his heart. Does it mean God changed his heart in conversion? The context doesn't bear that out, but the Holy Spirit was doing something in this man Saul's heart for a purpose. 1 Samuel 11:6, then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard of these things. So basically so that Saul could protect Israel and govern properly, God enabled him. Ah, you could go to Cyrus the Persian and others of the Old Testament, pagan, wicked men that God moved upon to perform certain things God wanted to perform, to achieve certain ends God wanted to achieve. And I've read those all of my life but I didn't think in terms of the Holy Spirit actively working in the hearts of unbelievers, but he does.

The Jews who rejected Christ. John 5:35, he was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to receive for a while, or rather you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. For a while there was a, a sensing, a, a, of the wonders of Christ, even something of the truth of Christ in the hearts of these unbelieving Jews. The Spirit did that. Acts 7, ah, ah, 5 reminds us that these are those who were always resisting the Holy Spirit. There is a general call of God, there is a general work of the Holy Spirit that can be resisted and it's a work in the hearts of the unbelievers.

Balaam, the Bible says Balaam was a pagan diviner. Numbers 23:5 says then the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth. God working in unbelievers but not savingly. It's not conversion.

So some conclusions for practical application on this truth. Let's remind ourselves that all experience the restraining work of the Holy Spirit. I believe in some capacity all of mankind is wrought upon by God's Holy Spirit that holds them back from falling into or living out the depth of the depravity which exists in their hearts. If you go to the book of Revelation, you know what you see? You see God pulling back the restraint and you see vile, terrible destruction and wickedness all over the earth as God pulls back the restraint.

Ah, 2 Thessalonians 2:7 says, "For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way." And I think the way God restrains, according to Romans 2:14-15, I'll just read that, "For the Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending

them." God restrains by working in men's hearts in concert with the law he's written in their hearts and the natural conscience. Brothers and sisters, would it not be right for us to pray, "O dear God, don't pull back Your restraining power in men's hearts"? As I've said before, ah, ah, I, I would, ah, ah, a guy that, ah, may have a, a good strong conscience and live by the, the morals of that conscience and the law witnessing to his heart, that doesn't make him a Christian but it does make him a better neighbor. And God in his goodness is holding back fallen, depraved sinners from just indulging. Of course, it looks like God might be removing some restraint from the United States of America. We would have not, I could have not fathomed in my wildest dreams 30-35 years ago what we are now celebrating in this country. I'm not saying allowing, I'm saying celebrating. "God, help us and please hold back, continue that restraining work in men's hearts." Genesis 6:3 reminds us, "Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever,'" there'll be a time when I pull back that restraint.

So I'll be honest, ah, ah, until I studied this text, I just didn't think that way. I just didn't think about the active work of the Spirit of God in unbelievers' hearts. I just had a simplistic view if the Spirit of God was working, he was gonna bring them to effectual, ah, ah, conversion. Of course, he does do that but that's not all he does.

Well, a second conclusion for practical application. Some experience a typical, a temporal rather, work for the benefit of others. God sometimes works in someone, Cyrus the Persian, Balaam, whoever you want to pick out, and it's for the purpose of being a benefit to someone else. Now this is not changing them, this is not converting them, this is not what we see in Ephesians 2:8 where it says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." If God saves you, he performs a change in your heart. That's not what this text is talking about. 1 Peter 1:9 says, "obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls." If God changes you, he brings about complete salvation. He puts you in the standing of justification at the moment of repentance and faith.

But Ahithophel, on the other hand, was gifted by God's Spirit to be an aid to David and Absalom. Saul was enabled by God's Spirit to govern well and this was God's sovereign purposes. Balaam was held back from pronouncing the curse and could only pronounce blessings because the Spirit of God was working in his heart. In Proverbs 21:1 reminds us, "The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes." God can act on the ruler's heart and move it where he wants. God can even use a corrupt tool like Cyrus the Persian or Donald the Trump to do good for the people of God. You think, say, "You think, you think God's working on Donald Trump?" Oh, yes I do. Now I don't know if his motives are not totally wacko but I like a lot of what he does and I hope God keeps doing that, or allowing that. But what is it? Dr. Vance Havner used to say, ah, God causes some things and God allows some things but things just don't happen. God's behind everything. He's involved and active. He's bigger than we think he is. One Puritan talked about the illustration that in the days of sailing ships, the Admiral's lantern guided the whole Navy. The lantern was possessed by one ship but it had impact on the others and God's Spirit can move, and it may not be possessed in them,

it may not own them as one of God's children, but it's providing some illumination to many.

Well, number 3 under conclusions for practical application. Some experience a temporal work that illumines the mind only. The word "partaker" here, again, has that idea of being associated with and so that's a real contrast to the permanent work of conversion or redemption or regeneration. Romans 11:29 says it's permanent in this way, "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." Philippians 1:6 words it this way, "He who began a good work in you will complete it," will perform it, "until the day of Christ Jesus." That's not just being associated with the Spirit, that's being overtaken by the Spirit, drawn and, and, and called, and wrought upon, and birthing of life in us to the end that as an act of our own will, then, we choose to trust Christ but could never have done it without the enablement of God's Spirit.

And again, the parable of the soils in, in Matthew 3 where there's an, a working of God in the hearts of some, ah, where the seed landed on the hard ground, or the seed landed on the rocky soil, or the seed landed where the thorns and the briers would choke it out, and they didn't go anywhere. There was something that happened, there was some fruit that appeared to come forth. Now I don't want to be dogmatic or absolute here but there was a time when I would've said whatever fruit was brought forth was just wholly a work of the flesh. Well, look at this text, I don't think so. If it's possible for a lost man, let me just read it again and it's starting in verse 4, to have "been enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift, been made partaker," associate, "of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then fallen away, it is impossible to renew him again to repentance."

So could it not be that some even in the church can perform many works that look like God is in them, but he does not own them? And brothers, I'm just gonna tell ya, just let me confess to you that, um, I, I interpret the lens through my experience in the local church. Now don't misunderstand me, we must follow sound exegetical principles in, in, in interpreting a text of Scripture but if God's grown your church and matured your church, you begin to see perhaps what some of these truths mean; as the church matures, the lens becomes clearer. And I used to wonder how can this man, ah, work with me and witness with me and teach with me and walk with me, and not just leave my ministry one day but leave and try to destroy me and try to destroy the church? I don't know, could it be, well, they were associated with the Holy Spirit but not born of the Spirit? They tasted the good things of God but they were not of God? Could it be? I think it very well could be. I don't know for sure but I think it very well could be. Here's what I want to tell you, brothers and sisters: this encourages the man of God who's pastoring to know that God's involved here and God knows what he's doing.

Hebrews 6:8 of our text says this, this, this, well, up in verse 7, the rain comes down, the rain of the Gospel and God's truth, and even the rain of spiritual workings fall on these people. Some of them, verse 7, "bring forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, and they receive a blessing from God." Some who receive the same Gospel, the same insights, the same work of the Spirit, but sort of conversion, verse 8, they "yield

thorns and thistles." It doesn't mean immediately. It takes a while for things to grow up, by the way. You may not see the real thorns, thorny thistley nature of their real heart for a long time but it comes up and it proves what they are. Over the long-term, the true fruit eventually comes out.

Oh, the Puritan, William Goe, in his commentary on Hebrews which I've told you, if you're gonna preach through Hebrews, you've gotta have Goe, he said a person can exhibit the sanctifying gifts of the Spirit but not experience the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the soul. I'm not preaching this as dogmatically true, I'm preaching this as is that not what this text is saying. Consider it.

Now a telling contrast. Let's lay out a contrast between the one that Paul is saying in Hebrews 4:6 is one who's associated with the Holy Spirit versus one who has truly been born of the Holy Spirit. In contrast, I want you to see 2 Peter 1:4 and 2 Peter 1:4 says, "For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you may become partakers," hey, there's the English word again, "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." Now these are truly converted people here. Now the English translators translated this word "partakers" but it's a totally different word. It is not the word used in Hebrews 4:6 that means "to be associated with." This is a word that means "in common, koinonios." You've heard of that before, haven't you, koinonia? It means "in common." What he's saying here is when you're born again, you have a nature common with God. You've been changed. You have the divine nature that is common now between you and God. That's radically different than just being associated with the divine Holy Spirit of Hebrews 4:6. In Hebrews 4:6, unbelievers who are false professors, hypocrites, are associated with the Spirit, in 2 Peter 1:4, believers are spelt, are said to be indwelt by the very nature of God.

Pastoring is not an easy thing. We don't need any more conference to teach you how to do smoke and lights. You need to wrestle with these things, pray them through, ask for wisdom, and I'll tell you, you'll be, you'll be amazed at how the Holy Spirit of God will start giving you thoughts in your mind of situations and people and bring these truths to bear. And, and, and brothers, be balanced. You can't know for certain, you don't go pronouncing, "Well, you're just enlightened but not converted. You're just associated but you're not born of the Spirit." Wait until the fruit comes completely out. But brother, I'm telling you, 40 years in the same church and watching people grow in Christ, I'll just put it this way, I think God gives you better and better and better discernment of what's going on. And Brother Brett, it encourages you. It encourages you. I said that because though he's fought some fights for the truth in his church, can't understand what he does understand. We do but we don't. I mean, we do understand God's doing something but we don't understand why it would happen. Here's why it would happen: they've only been associated with him, they've never been born by him.

Judas Iscariot, I'm convinced, had association with the Spirit of God but he was not born of the Spirit of God, and in time it came out, didn't it? I often say to my church and I'll say it like hypothetically, they say, "Pastor, do, how do we know if somebody's a genuine Christian? How do we know they're not a hypocrite?" And I'll say, "T-i-m-e. Over time

what they love and what they devote themselves to will show whether they were just associated or born by God's Spirit." These are two very different things. The partakers who were associated had not been born. They had not experienced what the Psalmist is talking about in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." God, birth something in me. Didn't, didn't, didn't Brother Tom bless us with that sermon last night on the new birth? "And renew a right steadfast spirit within me." Titus 3:5, "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." These are different phrases, different words than Paul used in Hebrews 6:4. Ephesians 2:5, "even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ," the powerful work of the sovereign Spirit of God seeking out God's elect, apprehending them, using the Gospel, drawing them to come to that place of total, ah, repudiation of their standing and their worth and their, their, their, their character before this holy God and receiving Christ and Christ alone as their only hope of salvation. I'm telling you, he makes you alive. You're not just associated with him.

Well, I think you should add two points on your outline there. These partakers are associated and not born of the Spirit and these partakers, those just associated, their bodies were never his temple. Their bodies were never his temple. 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?"

The Bible tells us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, Philippians 2:12. The truly saved have a salvation that is worked in them by the Spirit. Philippians 2:13, "for it is God who is at work in you," God who is at work in you, "both to will and to work for His good pleasure." Ephesians 1:11, "also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will." He enables those who are born again to exercise faith and stand as justified before God once and for all.

And fourthly, the truly saved have a salvation that is worked out through the help of the same Spirit. It's worked in you by the Holy Spirit and then it's worked out of you, lived out through you by the same Holy Spirit.

Now I want to go to verse 9 and then I'm gonna go to verse 10, then I'm gonna go to verse 11, and I want so badly for myself and us to grasp what I'm convinced God's telling us here and it's stuff that I missed for so many years, and I'm not saying, "Hey, I reached some new Gnostic level of understanding." But sometimes things are so thorough and plain, you just miss them somehow and I think this is one of those.

"But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way." He said, "I, I, I rattled your cage a little bit. I, I shook you up a little bit. I wanted to make you think because I know there's always that tendency to leave grace and go back to the law or try to synchronize the two, but he says, "But I, I'm convinced you aren't those who've just tasted. You have things in your life that are according to salvation. You have fruit that looks like the real

stuff. You have good vegetation," back up in verses 7 and 8. Not thorns and thistles eventually coming out. "You've not only been enlightened but you've been enlightened and saved. You've not only tasted the heavenly gift, you possess the heavenly gift. You're not only associated with the work of the Spirit, you've been born of the Spirit of God. You've not only tasted the good word of God but you've eaten and swallowed the good word of God. You've not only tasted the powers of the age to come but you truly hope in the powers of the age to come." He said, "I'm convinced of better things about you, things that accompany salvation."

And of course, this points to verse 10. Powerful stuff here. Notice this anthropomorphic phrase, putting God as if he's functioning as a man, though he can't but just to prove a point. Verse 10, "For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints." Could I implore you to think with me for a moment? Don't, don't get lazy on me now. Think with me for a minute. "God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints." God would be unjust to forget your work. Well, what does that mean? What does that mean? Here's my thoughts. There's a type of work for God that God himself would be unjust if he neglects to receive it as acceptable. There's a type of work for God that God himself could be condemned as unjust if he did not receive that work as acceptable in his sight.

Well, he amplifies it further. He said it's toward his name. It's a work toward his name. Could we say it this way: a work that honors his name like no other? A work that is the centerpiece of his purposes and his glory. I mean, it's a work that's so central to who God is, it's a work that's so centered in what God's about that when God sees that work, God is so connected to that, it's so right with him, he himself would be unjust not to accept that and honor that work.

So what is this one hallmark work, this one hallmark fruit of the true believer? It's when we love and work at what Jesus loves and what Jesus works at. It's when we love what Jesus loves and work at what Jesus works at. I hate to break it to this culturally relevant evangelical age: Jesus did not work at social justice for the culture while he was on the earth. He walked away from thousands of injustices and never fixed them. I'm not suggesting he wasn't grieved by them. Matter of fact, I think he was heartbroken, like we should be. But his work was a cross where he would purchase his church. You know why? That's what he loves. Be done with this mamby-pamby, Mickey Mouse, Arminian interpretation of God loves everybody the same. It's not in the Bible. There is a great love of God for all mankind, the love of our God would will that all men would come to him and repent and believe, but there is a deep, special, eternal, covenant love for God's elect children that's not like his love for anyone or anything else. That's what he's getting at for his name. When you do the work that's about what he's about, when you do the work out of a love in your heart for what he loves and that work is for the thing he loves, his church, and for us in time and space history, that's our local church, when we love the children of God, God's true church, elect children, then we are most like God. And when

God sees that work, God says, "I love that and I'd condemn Myself before I would say that work's not acceptable to Me." Are y'all getting this? This fires me up. It fires me up.

Does he not say it clearly the last part of verse 10, "in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints." Other Christians, i.e., do you understand the Bible's almost predominantly written to local churches? If you interpret it outside of a local church application, you're missing the interpretation? He's talking about the Jewish church, your church family. Sure, we love all Christians everywhere, of course we do, but I can't love everybody. I ain't got that much love even with God's help. That's why I love my wife different than other ladies. She, she, she's the one I'm...when you join a local church, you took a wife. That's the body you're devoted to for the glory of God. You do other things for other people, I understand that. As far as it is possible, the Bible says, do good to all men but especially the household of faith.

God can only honor and accept his own work. Now just mark that down. There is nothing any flesh being does that God will ever accept. Mother Theresa can give her life for a million worlds of lepers, God rejects it unless he's a repentant believer in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is performing the work through her. If God accepted anything other than his work, he'd be less than God. He can't believe, listen, he can't be pleased with anything less than his own work, i.e. the work of his co-equal Godhead partner, his Son Jesus Christ. He's only pleased with Jesus. Only pleased with Jesus. And I'm telling you, he is thoroughly pleased with Jesus and I love that because I'm in Jesus. I'm in Christ. And he's thoroughly pleased with me not because I'm me, because I'm in him.

God can only honor and accept his own work. Now listen: when you love what Jesus loves, it means he's born, birthed you in his Spirit. It means you're born again. It means he changed you and put that love in there. That didn't come naturally. You didn't think that up or study that up somewhere. You have to be born again and when you're born again, there's at least the seed of a special, covenant, devoted, deep, enduring love for God's children, God's church. At least the seed. At least the seed of it. And who put that there? You didn't put it there, God put it there. That's his work. That's him in you. That's God in you. My church members are looking at me like, "Brother Jeff, you say this all the time. Say something else."

When you love and work for the good of the church, that is his eternal, elect children organized in local churches, ekklesia means the church, it means called-out ones, but never forget you're not just called out from, you're called out to something, together in local church communities. So when you love and work for the good of his church, his true eternal children, then you are loving and working out of the indwelling presence of God that is in you. It is him doing it through you and he accepts it because it's his work. Do you get that? You know what some of you rascals need to do? You need to repent of your stinking pride. You need to be ever-mindful that any good that comes from me must come through him.

Philippians 2:13. Is it not clear as a bell? "For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." It's God who's at work both to will and to work

for his good pleasure. To will it. That is, the desire, the love you have for God's church and the building of God's church and evangelizing to build up God's church. The love you have for that and then the work you put in that love, the power and the perseverance, all this came from God and comes from the indwelling presence of God in us.

Now look at verse 11. Brother Jono, are you ready for verse 11? Brother Donny, where are you? You ready for verse 11? I have to call out my local church maniacs. Jesus was a local church maniac, well, in my vernacular he is. It's, it's what he's all about. What he's all about.

Look at verse 11, "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence," in other words, keep on ministering in this love and devoted work to one another in the church, to show the same diligence "so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end." The primary way you discern if you have true conversion is do you have the seed in your heart, and hopefully you've noticed it grow some, the seed in your heart of love and commitment and work and devotion to your brothers and sisters in Christ in your church? That is the greatest proof of true regeneration is that type of sanctification.

I've said this so many times, you know, when I was a young Christian and, boy, you couldn't have been more ignorant than I was, and you know, you'd wonder about salvation and then somebody told me, Brother Tom, somebody told me you're supposed to nail a tomato stake down in the yard and you nail the tomato stake down and you say, "Satan, do you see that tomato stake? I asked Jesus to save me." And so every time Satan makes me doubt, I'm gonna go look at that tomato stake. I could run through the wall four times right now. Why in heaven's name do you need to look at a tomato stake when you have the indwelling third person of the Godhead in your heart giving you a desire to love what he loves and work on what he works on? That's the evidence that you're born of God.

I'm gonna take, it won't take long but let me show you how thorough this is in Scripture. Here's the precept verses. We're gonna run through it quick. Just listen quick, okay? Romans 5:5, "and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." The Holy Spirit has poured this love in us. Now, folks, yes, I, I think it does include a love for all mankind but it must include that special, devoted, covenant love for God's work, God's church.

Hebrews 13:1-2, "Let love of the brethren continue," and I'm gonna read the rest of it right now. The love of the brethren. Notice it's about loving certain peoples. Now if you're in a carnal or shallow church, this doesn't register to you very well because you're trying to love a bunch of unregenerate Baptists or unregenerate Presbyterians or whatever they might be, and that's weird. You're thinking, "Where's this bonding passionate love?" And it's not happening because a lot of them don't know him, but as God matures the church, it gets more and more and more and more real, at least it certainly has in me. Well, here's the proof. Again our text, Hebrews 6:10, "God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, having ministered and in still ministering to the saints." What is the way they know that they are God's and are

pleasing to God and have a changed heart that only God can give them? They have a devoted love for God's church.

Hebrews 10:32-34, "But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated." You became sharers with those who so treated. You loved and cared for your brothers and sisters in Christ even when persecution was happening and it cost you something. That love shows you're his. Not general love but a love for the church that's being persecuted. Verse 34, "For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one."

Hebrews 13:16, "do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased." Sharing and doing good to who? Don't let the, the, the humanist liberals take these texts and run off to Mars with them. It's the church. It's the church. It's written to churches.

Hebrews 13:3, "Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body." Not just prisoners. Praise God for prison ministries, I'm not saying that's wrong, but that's not your verse. You can't take the church's verse for prison ministry. You take the verses to go into all the world and make disciples for prison ministry. This is the body. This is our fellow Christians. Love for the body shows I'm God's.

Matthew 25:31-45. We'll just blitz through this quickly. The Son of God's gonna come in the glory with his angels. He's gonna sit on a glorious throne. All the nations will gather before them. He'll separate everybody as, as a shepherd separates sheep from goats, sheep he'll put on his right, goats on the left. Then the king will say to those on his right, "Come you who are blessed of My Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me." You know how many pastors I've heard interpret that, that that's some general care for all of mankind? Absolutely not. Read the Scripture.

Verse 37, "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You?'" Saul, why are you persecuting me? I'm persecuting Christians. That's me. "When did we see You hungry," verse 37, "and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" The context is, is generally true Christians suffer in this culture, and generally you know you're a true Christian when you stand with them and love them and care for them and don't run for the tall grass. It shows you're really one of his.

Verse 40, "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers,' in the world? Nope. To fellow mankind? No. "To the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine," his church, other true Christians, "even the least of them, you did it to Me. Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; I was naked, and you did not clothe Me; I was sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'" The whole context is Christians, fellow believers.

Brothers and sisters, every single event that ever has occurred or ever will occur in time and space history is to the end of Christ completing what he loves in which is his primary work, and that is the building of his church, and at the judgment, that's what he's looking for, who's been with me in my work? Who's loved what I've loved? And by the way, your theology matters here because if you think Jesus went to a cross and did a sloppy atonement, just kinda splashed out provision and wringed his hands and hoped somebody would love him enough to get saved, if that's your view of the atonement, you miss everything. But when you understand from before the foundation of the world he loved his own with an everlasting love. He loved them through eternity. He came into time and space history and his heart was on his own. He splashed the love and goodness of God to many. I think his heart was that, "I wish all would come to Me." But he had those he had chosen and elected and predestined who were his own, and he went to the cross and he died for his bride. Those were his. And when he comes again, he's gonna look to everybody, "What did you do for what I loved and for My people? Because if you're really one of them, you would've stood with them. You would've helped them when they were locked in prison for the Gospel. You would've fed them when they were run out of their homes and had nothing to eat because they just wanted to be Christians."

Pastor, you pastor a true church and you go through, you're gonna go through some troubles and you know what God's gonna do? He's gonna show you whose are God's and whose are not because those who are God's will stand with God's church and God's truth if God's changed their heart to love what he loves and to work on what he works on.

Boy, here's, James 2:14-17. I'm almost through. "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" Can that faith, it's a faith that's a non-saving faith but can that faith save him? Well, what's the context? It's right before us, verse 15, "If a brother or sister," this is written to a local church, it's written about a local church, it's written about Christians. If a fellow, true, believing Christian "is without clothing and in need of daily food," and again, the context is persecution from the world that's causing this, "and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." Here's what he's saying: true

saving faith at the minimum is gonna be about what Christ loves and what Christ worked for and that's his church.

I'm telling you, these folks that can join our churches and we're striving to reform our churches to be honoring of God and true to God, and they can abandon that and go to the circus church across town, they're walking off from something that's probably showing us that kind of faith can't save you because you don't love what Christ loves, and you don't want to work at what Christ is working at, building his church. It's all centered in the love for brothers and sisters and the true church.

1 John 3:16b-17, "and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Whoever sees the world's, ah, has the world's goods and sees," who? His fellow man? No. Certainly we would do things for our fellow man but that's not what the text is saying. "Sees his brother in need," that's a fellow Christian, "and closes his heart, how does the love of God abide in him?" His point is you hadn't been born again because you don't have that seed to love those that Jesus loves in a special way, his church.

John 13:35, "By this all men will know you are My disciples," by the great expositional preaching of your pulpit. I hope you have solid Spirit-empowered exegetical, but that's not how people know. They're know because they'll say, "They've got a love that only someone else could have given them. They have a passion and a care for each other." And maybe the world is able to say, "And it looks like that kind of love they say their Savior has for them." That's how we know they're his.

See, some of you need to get in a good true church so you can experience this. I mean, I mean, really, or work in the one you got to get it there. And I'm not saying you ever get done but I, I, I can just say this, at Grace Life Church of the Shoals my love for these people today is much greater than it was 20 years ago because we've just grown together. Just be perfectly honest, we've had to lose some people and we kept growing. But it's a love beyond description.

1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us." Can I amplify that on out with a systematic balance of truth? They were not really of us because they had been associated with the Spirit but not born of the Spirit. They didn't have the seed put in them through the new birth to begin to love what Christ loves and do the work that Christ is doing. That's why they went out from us. "For if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they are all not of us."

1 John 4:1-11. I'm not gonna read that. Same truth.

But I will mention this and we're done. 1 Corinthians 11:18-19 Paul writes to the troubled church at Corinth and he says, "For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. For there must," in other words, a divine sovereign God's doing something, "there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you." When, when, when, when factions form, Paul said, at least you know God is accomplishing

something. If you'll look at it, you'll probably find those who love the truth and love the church and those who love themselves and want power and control. God's accomplishing something.

So the next time you do counseling on assurance of salvation, show them these texts and look for at least the seed, it may not have matured much late yet, it may not be showing a lot, but at least the seed that says, "I love those people. I want to be around true Christians. Matter of fact, I can't be away from them very long." Can I just be transparent? I like getting away from them a little bit sometimes and only because I'm the preaching pastor and it wears me out and I need a little respite every now and then. Amen, Brother Randy? A good Presbyterian brother back there, sovereign grace brother.

Well, just be aware Hebrews teaches that there are some of those who are associated with the Spirit but not born of the Spirit, and in time you'll know the difference by do they love what Jesus loves and do they get in on the work that Jesus is doing, building his church.