

**Subject: *The Hardest Kind of Evangelism***

**Scripture: *Matthew 7:13-29***

Jesus was finishing His Sermon on the Mount and reminded the people of two kinds of ways (the broad way and the narrow way), two kinds of trees (those with good fruit and those with evil fruit), and two kinds of builders (one who built on a rock and one who built on the sand). In this sermon He warns about those who go through the motions and have some profession of religion, yet they are not truly saved and they will not enter Heaven. Jesus was addressing the matter of false converts. The Bible speaks of false prophets, false teachers, false apostles, and false brethren.

In Matthew 13, Jesus taught by parables. He taught about the sower, the seed, and the soil. Not every response to the gospel leads to genuine salvation. Some appear to be saved, but are not. Jesus said if we don't understand this parable we can't understand other parables. He told a parable about the wheat and the tares. He said the kingdom of heaven is like a great net in which all kinds of fish and other creatures are caught, and in the end there will be a sorting out of the good from the bad. All of these stories have a common theme: some people appear to be saved, but they are not saved. Some make a profession, but not all have possession of eternal life. There are four possibilities when it comes to salvation:

- People who are saved and sure of it
- People who are saved, but not sure
- People who are lost and know it
- People who think they are saved, but they are actually lost

This last group is the danger zone. The Bible warns us over and over about false conversions and counterfeit Christians. With that as a background I want to talk about the hardest kind of evangelism, and that is reaching out to false converts, people who profess to be saved but are not. There are several reasons why it is difficult to reach them.

**The Difficulty of Reaching False Converts:**

1. We are unwilling to accept the fact they are lost – Some of the people we know well, even family members, may be lost. These people are convinced they are saved and they have convinced us they are saved. We want to believe them in spite of what we see.

2. We worry about offending someone – Have we counted the cost if their soul should be lost? If a person is truly saved, he will not be offended. If a person is not saved, he needs someone to wake him up and shake him up.

3. We are concerned about “judging others” (Mt. 7:1-5) – There is a difference between fault-finding and evangelizing. We are not to be judges, but we are to be fruit-inspectors.

4. We have been taught not to doubt a profession of faith – We have been taught that doubt comes from Satan and we when a person makes a profession of faith he should never doubt it. We have even told someone to write down the date of their salvation and whenever they are tempted to doubt it, look at the date of their decision. It has become very popular to teach professing Christians that they can be sure of their salvation no matter what their lives are like.

- **Titus 1:16** *They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*

- **James 2:19-20** <sup>19</sup> *Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.* <sup>20</sup> *But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*
- **Matthew 7:21** *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*
- **Luke 6:46** *And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? To call Jesus "Lord" and not obey him is like the kiss of Judas who betrayed Him.*

5. We emphasize justification and neglect sanctification – These are not identical, but they are inseparable. Salvation is more than making a decision; it is becoming a disciple.

- **John 8:31** *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.*
- **Hebrews 12:14** *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

During the Protestant Reformation the great truth of justification by faith was rediscovered and the Catholics argued that if a person was justified by faith only there would be no need for holy living. The Reformers answered that charge by showing that sanctification is the biblical and inevitable experience of every true believer. In other words, whenever God justifies a person, He also sanctifies him. If there is no sanctification, there is no justification.

6. We forget the biblical teaching on self-examination

- **2 Corinthians 13:5** *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* It is possible to be in the church, but not in the faith, to be in a Sunday School class, but not in the faith, to be in a Christian family, but not in the faith, to be in the Bible, but not in the faith. We need to understand the danger of self-deception.

7. We overlook the biblical teaching on self-deception

- **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** <sup>9</sup> *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,* <sup>10</sup> *Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*
- **James 1:22** *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*
- **James 1:26** *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

### **The Duty of Reaching False Converts:**

1. Pray for God to open their eyes and convict them

- **2 Corinthians 4:3-4** <sup>3</sup> *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:* <sup>4</sup> *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*
- **John 16:8** *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*

2. Point them to the Scriptures

- **2 Timothy 3:15** *And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*
- **1 John 5:13** *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.* The apostle John spells out his intention. He is not trying to make us doubt our salvation, but he does want us to examine our lives to make sure we have eternal life. The truth of Scripture won't shake genuine believers, but it will alarm people who have false assurance. The letter of First John contains a series of tests by which we can examine our lives to see if we are really saved. The Word of God is the mirror God uses to show us our true selves.

### 3. Look for evidence of new life and real fruit

- **2 Corinthians 5:17** *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*
- **Galatians 6:15** *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.* It is not religion or ritual, but regeneration that counts.
- **Matthew 3:8** *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.*
- **Matthew 7:20** *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

We can't be satisfied and have assurance that someone is saved unless we see a real change. If a person is saved he will love what God loves and hate what God hates. He will have a spiritual appetite for prayer and Bible study. He will love the church and serve the Lord. He will enjoy worship and long for it. There is something worse than no hope, and that is false hope. Are you clinging to a false hope? Do you know someone who has a false hope? We must reach them with the truth while there is still time. Have we counted the cost of a soul that is lost forever?