

Previously A Crown - But Now A Cross

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[0 : 0 0] I want to, this morning, start with a riddle. You guys up for a riddle? All right, here we go. You're the engineer of a train. 36 people are on this train. At the stop, 10 people get off, but 2 people get on.

At the second stop, nobody gets off, but 5 people get on. At the third stop, 4 people get off, and 2 people get on.

The question, what's the name of the engineer? Some of you get it.

Some of you are like, I started the joke with, you're the engineer on a train. So your answer should have been your first name, right? Your name.

[1 : 0 3] All right, so that, it's corny. I get it. I played a trick on you. But it illustrates about the difficulty of actually listening rather than just hearing.

Are we really failing to listen? And so we're going to start off with a little bit of a review of where we were at last week. And then we're going to go from there talking about the parable of the soils, which has to do about hearing and listening.

The different kinds of soils that are out there. So if you want to follow along in your Bibles, it's Luke chapter 8, verse 11. I'll have it up on the screen here for you as well. Now, the parable is this.

And Jesus is now explaining the parable to his disciples because they've asked. They didn't understand it. So here is his explanation. The seed is the word of God.

So the sower stays the same. What he is sowing, the seed remains the same. It is the word of God itself. It is the message of the gospel. What is different are the different kinds of soils that the seed gets cast upon.

[2 : 1 3] The ones along the path are those who have heard. Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts so that they may not believe and be saved. So this first group of people are those along the footpath.

And it represents a hardened heart. These are already filled in from last week. So you'll see them just kind of show up here on the screen. And we talked about this last week.

If you can hear the message today and you continue to not believe the gospel, you need to understand that you're not the only one involved in your unbelief. That Satan is your enemy and there is a demonic network that is trying to feed you information to make you question the gospel, to make you reject the gospel, just to reject the word of God and so understand that that's what's happening.

The second kind of soil that the seed gets cast on, the ones on the rock, rocky soil, a table of rock underneath a few inches of soil, are those who when they hear the word receive it with joy, but these have no root.

They believe for a while and in the time of testing they fall away. So this is the rocky place. It's a shallow commitment. Their quickness of their response is an indication of their lack of depth or their lack of perception as to what the gospel really means.

[3 : 41] And so this is in the other gospels that have this story, talks about the persecution of life, the hardship that can come with life.

Can have a tendency to weigh on us and perhaps even to the point of walking away. The third type of soil, as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life and their fruit does not mature.

So again, not things that are evil that are coming up. This is just good things in life that can distract us from what perhaps is the better things in life.

And so these are the briar patch people. These are the ones with misplaced priorities. And then these are people here distracted.

They're chasing so many good things that the better things seldom get their attention. So that's the third group. And then finally, those on the good soil, they are those who hearing the word, hold it fast, hold it strongly, and in an honest and good heart and bear fruit with patience.

[4 : 56] Or as in Mark's gospel, chapter 4, verse 20, it says, but those that were sown on the good soil were the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit.

And that's a key. Both passages talking about bearing fruit as being the outcome. And Mark's gospel actually mentions percentages, 30-fold, 60-fold, and 100-fold.

So it's much fruit that is being built there. So this is the fertile plot. It is a receptive heart. These are the ones who bear fruit. And where we left it last week is with this question.

Which of these soils then represents people who are saved? Because if you look at almost every commentary, they're going to have a discussion about which of these are saved.

Is it just the last group? The last group who bear fruit, and the other three do not then qualify as those who are saved? Or does it include the second and third, and they've just struggled with their faith in different ways, and yet they're still saved?

[6 : 06] Or is it perhaps just the third and fourth? Some people would refer to Luke's passage of this. Well, again, let me ask it this way.

Is the question, which of these soils represent saved people, is that the right question? Or is there a better question?

Does the parable even reference those who are saved? Or is the parable more about our maturity in Christ?

The fact that there are those who would bear fruit 30-fold, 60-fold, and 100-fold. In Luke's gospel, verse 18, I'm sorry, verse 14, and their fruit does not mature.

This is talking about the briarpatch group of people who have the thorns, the weeds grow up around them, and it chokes them out. So they bear fruit. So if the idea of, well, a saved person bears fruit, well, here's a group of people who have borne fruit, but the question is, it doesn't mature.

[7 : 24] And maybe perhaps that's what the parable is about. It's about mature fruit. And actually, the Greek word here for fruit that does not mature is just the one word in the Greek, and it's just a description of fruit that has come to its peak of perfection.

You guys understand what I mean by that. We live in an area where there's lots of fruit trees, and when fruit comes fully ripened on the tree, and you pick it off, and it's fresh, and it's just brimming with juice, and it's just full of sweetness, and that's what Jesus is referring to here.

That's what he is expecting of us, fruit that matures, fruit that is fully ripened, fruit that produces. It's productive.

It fulfills what it's designed to do. It's not just a little stub of a thing that hasn't matured on the end of the branch. Now, what's confusing is, in Luke chapter 8, he talks about fruit that doesn't mature.

That third group of people with the weeds, it has fruit that doesn't mature, but then in Mark's gospel, it uses a different word. It proves unfruitful, and then in the Greek there, it's just not fruit.

[8 : 43] That's all it says is not fruit. So it's like if you're reading Mark's gospel, it's like, well, those people aren't saved because they don't have any fruit. But then in Luke's gospel, it says, well, they've got fruit, but it doesn't come to maturity.

It doesn't ripen. It's not productive. So which are saved and which are not? And again, I would ask, is that the right question?

Is that even the question that Jesus is answering with this parable? Is there perhaps a better question? Does the rest of the gospels, do the rest of the gospels and the rest of the New Testament perhaps point to this being not about salvation, but about maturing in our faith, growing in our faith?

And you have this on the old section, the bottom of the back page of the old notes from last week. We are saved not only to escape hell, and a lot of times, I think unfortunately, people think of Christianity as just that, kind of a fire insurance, an escape from hell.

You know, I've got the escape hatch. I've trusted Christ as my savior. I'm good. But it's more than that. That's not why he saves us, and that's a bold statement.

[10 : 05] But let me follow it up for you. But to attain, quote, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that's more than just being saved, isn't it? That's fully grown up.

And to bear much fruit, quote, unquote, let's take a look at those passages. John chapter 15, another parable. Parable of the vine and the branches. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

He goes on in verse 5. He it is that bears much fruit. That's the goal that God has for your life. His goal for your life is not that you would be saved.

I can't believe the preacher said that. His goal for your life is that, yes, you would be saved, but that you would be grown up in the faith, mature, bearing fruit, not just a little bit, but much fruit.

That's what he's after. And when you look at the rest of the New Testament, perhaps you would come to understand, wow, that's true. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 13, talking about how the gift of pastors and evangelists and teachers and prophets and apostles, these were given to the church to help the church to mature, to come to a place of ministry until we all attain, verse 13, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

[11 : 48] That's the goal. Again, 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and 3 talk about the different stages of Christian growth.

And look at what Paul says. The natural person, this is the person who is of the flesh. They do not accept the things of the Spirit of God for they are folly to him and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

He's talking about unsaved people. People who are only natural. People who are only in the flesh. These are unsaved people he's talking about. He goes on in verse 15 to talk about the spiritual person.

Now the spiritual person, by Paul's definition, is the person who is spiritually matured. Mature. This is the goal. A person who is spiritually matured has the ability to judge things or discern right from wrong and is able to be judged by no one because they have that level of maturity.

They have that level of discernment, of understanding because they have been trained in the things of God and in the Word of God. They are spiritually mature. So by Paul's definition, an unbeliever, an unbeliever, or someone, he goes on.

[13 : 13] Let me go on to the next portion of this. Chapter 3, verse 1. But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, as mature, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

And there's actually two different categories of people here. People of the flesh who he's writing to, the people in Corinth, who were believers. He's writing to the church at Corinth.

He's writing to people who have trusted Christ as Savior and yet they are fleshly. They have the conflict between flesh and spirit going on within them. They're allowing the flesh to win so they're not maturing.

These are people who may have some fruit but it's not mature. It doesn't do any good. It's not ripe. It hasn't come to fruition. And then as infants in Christ.

Now infants in Christ, they may be spirit-filled. They may be people who are led by the spirit but they're not, according to Paul's definition, spiritual because they're not yet mature.

[14 : 17] By definition, they're still infants. They're still new in the faith. And so because they don't have yet the depth of understanding and knowledge in the word of God, they don't have discernment, the ability to understand what is right and what is true and what is false.

They need to be trained in that. So that gives you the four categories of the unsaved, the fleshly, the infants in Christ and then the spiritually mature people.

And that's what he's after. Paul said, I fed you with milk, not solid food for you were not yet ready for it because you're still fleshly. And even now you're not ready for you're still of the flesh.

The problem that he had with the church at Corinth with many of the people in that church was that they just weren't growing up. They were still behaving according to the flesh. And so Paul said, listen, that's incomplete.

It doesn't finish. The job is not finished, if you will. So to fall short of this goal, even though you may have been saved, you might be here today as a saved person, as someone who's trusted in Christ as Savior.

[15 : 24] But again, that's not the goal that the Lord has for you. So to be short of this goal, even though you're saved, is to fail to attain that for which you were called and that for which you have been set apart.

Let me illustrate that with some more scripture just to kind of drive this point home. Romans 8, 28 and 29. And we know that all things for those who love God work together for good.

For those who are called according to his purpose and for those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be saved. Now you might read that and say, well, that sounds okay. But it's not.

This is, if you notice in the right-hand corner, the small letters, this is the translation known as the RSCT. This is Rich's silly, crazy translation.

This is not what this verse says. Let me tell you what this verse says. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be what? Conformed to the image of his Son.

[16 : 34] That's his goal for your life. His goal for your life is not that just that you would be saved. Yes, being saved is a part of that. But that you would be conformed to the image of his Son.

That's the work that he's started in you when you were saved. And he's not going to give up on you. He's going to bring you to completion. He wants to do that before he sees you face to face.

But when you go to heaven, that work will be complete. But until then, our goal is to match up with what he has made us. He has made us complete in Christ, part of his family.

He has given us everything that we need. We need to live up to try to attempt to live up to what we already are in Christ.

Let me show you another one of these. Again, this is the RSCT, so it's Rich's craziness. Even as he, this is Ephesians chapter 1 verse 4, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be saved and escape the fires of hell, that's not what Ephesians 1 verse 4 says.

[17 : 39] Let me show you what it says. That we should be holy. That word holy just means set apart, different than the rest of the world, and be blameless before him.

Now, that's our standing in Christ once we trust him as Savior. But his goal for us is that how we live would begin to match up with who he has already made us.

and that is mature in Christ. Again, Ephesians 5.27 from the Rich's Crazy translation here. And this is talking about the church and how the church represents the bride of Christ and Christ is presenting this bride, the church, which is us, to himself.

So he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. That she might be barely saved and just clean enough to qualify. That's not what the verse says.

But unfortunately, how many Christians, quote unquote, have this as their mindset? All I want to do is get in. You even got some gospel songs out there that are talking about, I just want to get in.

[18 : 54] Just give me a little core, a little tiny mansion over in the corner of heaven and I'll be satisfied. That's heresy. That is not what God wants for your life is that you would just barely get in.

No. It says this. Without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish.

The idea that how we live would match up with who we already are in standing in Christ. He's already made you this in terms of your standing before Christ.

Now, live like it. Mature. Dig into the scriptures. Understand. Be a part of a Bible study so that you can grow and mature in your walk with the Lord to become what he has called you to be.

What he has set you apart to be. One more of these silly ones. Colossians chapter 1. And you who once were alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you saved and having received your eternal fire insurance policy.

[20 : 19] Again, people treat salvation as if that's what it is. Just a fire insurance policy. Well, I walked an aisle, I prayed a prayer, and does my life begin to match up with what God has done in my life?

And when that person dies, everyone is left to wonder, were they ever saved? Was it genuine?

Was it real? Was there a time in their life when they seemingly served the Lord and wanted to live for Him? And you might answer that question, well, yes, there was a time and that, but where are they today?

And what happened? And it describes these second and third soils, right? Someone may have had some persecution come along, and it just caused them to kind of give up the faith.

Or they've just got so busy and distracted with life and the pleasures of life. Nothing bad? But their priorities just kind of got misplaced.

[21 : 23] And people wonder themselves, am I saved? They're left to question, did I really trust Christ as my Savior?

Am I saved or not? And that's not even the question we should be asking, but that's kind of where we're left with those second and third soils.

No. He is now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death in order to present you holy. That means set apart, different than, and blameless, and above reproach before Him.

These are what He's already done when you became a child of God. Now our lives need to match up with what He has already done. Another passage, this is 2 Peter chapter 1, for this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue and virtue with knowledge, knowledge, self-control, self-control with steadfastness, steadfastness with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, brotherly affection with love, all of that.

for if these qualities are yours and are increasing to keep you from being ineffective, unfruitful.

[22 : 45] That's His goal for your life, that you would be productive, effective here, fruitful, more fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 9, for whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. He's writing to Christians.

Christians who have forgotten the gift that they have been given. You've been cleansed from your former sins. Now your life needs to, so to your, to add virtue to your life, add love and steadfastness, all the things that he mentioned in that first bunch of verses.

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent. Here's the charge for us now. Be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election. For if you practice these qualities, you will never fail.

the person whose life continues to mature, continues to produce fruit, continues to bear much fruit and just continues to grow and to mature, when that person dies, not only they, they have the assurance of their faith, they know where they're going, they have that confidence and that hope, but so do the people around them.

[24 : 14] But the people with the other two soils, the people who fall away due to persecution or the people who drift away because of misplaced priorities and distractions, they're left to wonder for themselves.

I don't, am I saved? Am I not? I don't know. And their families, at the funeral, there's much confidence. Oh yes, he's saved, she's saved.

But then, the struggle within that we don't like to talk about, are they really? Do we know? Do we have that confidence?

And it's because the goal was never just salvation. Yes, it includes salvation. I don't want to say that God doesn't care about your salvation. He does, absolutely.

For God so loved the world, he sent his only begotten son, that whosoever would believe in him would not perish but have eternal life. That's talking about salvation. There are verses that talk about our salvation. But the goal for everyone who gets saved is not just to be saved.

[25 : 27] It's that your life would bear fruit. That your life would mature. All right, so now, now we're moving on to new content. Okay, that was, that was just the end of last week's sermon.

We never got to. So, verse six, hopefully this will go quick. Otherwise, stampede. No one, after lighting a lamp, covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed or puts it on a stand so that those who enter it may see the light.

And you might think, well, Jesus just changed the topic. He's talking about listening and hearing, are they really listening? But he hasn't changed the topic. It's still the same topic. Follow this with me.

He's talking about light and a lamp. You put it, so it's broadcast the light. So that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest. Remember, he's talking about previously the secrets of the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

Right? The mystery. And it's just talking about how it was hidden in the Old Testament and now it's been exposed and brought to light in the New Testament. Nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.

[26 : 33] He's talking about the truth of the gospel coming to light. Take care then how you what? What's the word? He's talking, he's still talking about hearing. Okay? For the one who has more will be given, more will be given and to the, from the one who has not even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.

How's that for a promise? Use it or lose it. Right? That's kind of the mindset here. So, previously a crown but now a cross.

In the early part of his ministry Jesus is presenting himself as the king of this new kingdom. The king of Israel. The Messiah. The promised coming king.

Now he's kind of switched and he's talking about his death. And he's talking about the mysteries of the kingdom. The nature of the kingdom. And it's confusing and people don't understand it and that's on purpose and that's why there's parables to keep those who will be unbelievers going forward unbelieving and for those who will come to accept Christ they will get it.

Jesus did not envision a Gnostic few. Now the word Gnostic there the G is silent as opposed to agnostic. Most people I think understand what an agnostic is.

[27 : 52] Someone who isn't sure doesn't know. That's what the word agnostic means. The A is a negative. The Greek word gnosko Gnostic means knowledge.

So an agnostic is someone who doesn't have knowledge. Doesn't know. Doesn't So they're not atheists. They don't know if they are or not. They're agnostic.

But there's also a group of people called Gnostics. These are people who know more than you do or think they do. I've got the secrets of the kingdom. I know what they are.

If you come across someone who says who's always constantly talking about the secrets of the I know the secrets of the Christian life or I know the secrets of walk away quick.

Okay. Because they're out in the open now. They've been exposed. That's what the gospel is all about. So he did not envision a Gnostic few who would discover and keep his secrets to themselves.

[28 : 50] and if you pay the low, low price of \$39.95 I'll tell you what the secrets are. The disciples of Jesus would eventually go on to proclaim gospel truth openly both at home and abroad.

So that's what that's about. That's what that's talking about. And again he goes on in verse 19 and he's talking about what happens is his mothers or his mother not mothers that would be awkward his mother shows up and his brothers.

Okay. So he's got actually these are these are half brothers that Joseph and Mary would have had and they came to him but they could not reach him because of the crowd.

And he was told your mother and your brothers are standing outside desiring to see you and what we find out in the other gospels the other Matthew, Mark, and Luke about this incident is the brothers were starting to think that Jesus was going a little and so they were coming to take him for a little respite.

Come away with us Jesus things are getting a little crazy you need to come with us and let's get some rest and a good meal and see how you start thinking after that. And you can see Mary's struggle in all of this because she's participating even though she's known from the beginning what this is all about even here she struggles kind of in a similar way to when John the Baptist was struggling are you the one?

[30 : 20] I don't know and so we see that happening here verse 21 but he answered them my mother and my brothers are those who what? So it's still about the way that Luke is organizing these stories it's still about how a person hears and whether they're receptive to the word of God and what Jesus is teaching those who hear the word of God and do it and by doing it that means that they're going to produce fruit right?

That's the whole point it's not just hear it and that's it and they go home and nothing changes it's they hear it and they do it and produce fruit that's the whole point of all of this so from all of that if we can put all of last week and this week together and let's talk about some practical application points that we can get from this parable of the soils here's the first one we are unable to grasp God's truths apart from divine enlightenment it is the Lord who must reveal it to us the word of God the gospel is revealed only when God opens the eyes of someone so that they would respond God's truth is vastly above our human ability to grasp Isaiah 55 Lord your ways are higher than our ways we don't we don't get it 1 Corinthians 2 7 but we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God

Paul said here the secret and hidden is not that it's today still secret hidden it was hidden in the Old Testament time now it's been revealed through the resurrection the cross the burial the resurrection of Jesus now it's been openly exposed which God decreed before the ages for our glory none of the rulers of this age understood it for if they had they would not have crucified the Lord of glory if people would have understood the mystery of the kingdom beforehand Jesus would not have been crucified but as it is written what no eye has seen nor ear heard nor the heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love him these things God has revealed to us through the spirit it is through spirit enabling that we are able to read hear understand the word of God not on our own human level second application point when it comes to possessing God's truth we will either use it or lose it we just saw this a few minutes ago verse 18 of Luke 8 take care then how you hear for the one who has more will be given and from the one who has not even what he thinks he has will be taken away so the mysteries of gospel truth are not just for our information if all we're doing is coming and receiving information receiving education even you'll eventually lose that if there is no transformation if there is no change in in your in your life change has to happen and again

Romans 12 2 don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that is by testing you may discern what is the will of God what is good and acceptable and perfect it's putting it into practice that's what matters problem passages let's talk about that because actually the parable of the soils could be considered a problem passage because there are different ways to interpret it and by the way if you want to disagree with me about how to understand the parable of the soils and you haven't figured out that two and three and four are all saved or two and three are not and only four is saved and okay I'm not going to argue!

with you about that's fine we can have different understandings of that passage but I think the main point I think we can demonstrate that that it's about bearing fruit that's what is key here so these difficult passages then should drive us to him not away and that's telling as well because you will see that by some people's reactions to certain passages of scripture too often people will use difficult texts as their excuse to either not trust Christ at all or sometimes you will see Christians use that as an excuse to not study their Bible and if they are saved they remain kind of infants or their fruit doesn't produce doesn't mature and because they're almost afraid of the text they don't understand it and because they don't understand it they walk away that's not how we should treat it those difficult to understand passages ought to drive us to the author of the scriptures not that you're going to get every passage figured out in time

[35 : 54] I fully expect that by the time I die whenever that happens I will not have all of this stuff figured out okay there will still be debatable passages and topics and that's okay I like that by the way because he is God and I am not I should not expect to understand everything I want to understand as much as I can as much as he will allow I will continue to study and pursue but I would be awfully naive to think that I'm going to have it all figured out any of us I skipped over that last one here the parable of the soils contains an evangelistic lesson as well as a warning and the lesson is basically this I'm going the wrong way here we go we must proclaim the gospel or sow the seed using the language of the parables indiscriminately that's what the farmer did he took the seed and he just spread it around some landed on the foot path

I'm pretty sure you're not thinking anything is going to grow on the foot path right you know those of you have a garden or farm you understand that on the part of the garden that's between the plants that you're walking on probably not going to grow too much you might have weeds growing there but you're not going to produce much at it and we have to have that same kind of mindset because we don't get to decide what kind of soil a person is we don't even know that you may have stories that are similar to some of the things that I've experienced Sherry's grandfather my wife's grandfather was so anti Christian and so anti gospel he would cuss in my face knowing that I was going to be a preacher that was a treat for him when we would go over to grandma and grandpa's house because he could just pull out all the words and all the phrases that he knew would get under my skin and he was trying to do that and

I wouldn't for the most part I wouldn't take his bait you know I wouldn't I wouldn't argue with him and this is a guy who's on a foot path hardened heart but about six months before he died he got sick and he went to the hospital and Sherry and I walked in and he broke into tears that threw me for a loop right there and the words out of his mouth were I want what you have talking about Sherry and I I want to be saved is that possible and so he came to Christ that evening in the hospital he went home and he got better and he was a different man for a while before he died he died like six months after that but during that six months he was different he was still grumpy and grouchy as all get out but he wouldn't cuss like he did he wouldn't say off color things like he did before his anger was tempered differently so you saw some growth even in that short period of time so this is a guy who went from someone on the footpath to someone who had good soil and receptive heart and we don't know that so our responsibility is just to sow it wherever he leads us wherever he takes us wherever we go just to be willing to do that number five when it comes to sharing our faith there's no magic bullet there's no one way to someone to

Christ or there's no magic phrase that's gonna do the trick every time if someone just hears this presentation given in just this way no it doesn't work that way you see that throughout the new testament you see it just in everyday life people respond to the gospel in different ways and different settings and the core truth remains the same but sometimes even the words are different because you can use believe and faith and trust all equally they all mean the same thing and in the Greek it's actually just the one word but we've got three English words for one Greek word why why and so just do it is the main thing here when a person starts off really strong there's still no guarantee that it will end well and we've all seen this and it leaves us with questions at the end and and and and sometimes a passage like

Proverbs 22 6 comes to mind right where you train up a child and away! he go and in the end he will what? depart from it I mean if you're a parent you probably like oh I'm going to count on that verse but it's not a promise it's just a proverb proverbs are statements that are just generally true about life but they're not guarantees it's not a promise so you've seen you know of people who started off well who maybe at some point came to church and prayed a prayer and accepted Christ as savior and then for whatever the reason might be ended up just walking away or falling away or drifting away however you want to say that however it looked like to you in that moment and then if that person never really recommits their life to Christ at the end of their life the question becomes were they saved or were they not and we're left basically to wonder we don't know there is no guarantee we do know that if their faith was genuine and real that a person cannot lose what

[42 : 33] God has so graciously given them in their life they've become a child of God they've been adopted into the family God does not go back on what he has done that is so contrary to so much of what we see in the scriptures the idea that someone can lose what God has given but I got to tell you it sure looks that way with some people doesn't it and we all question is this person saved are they not I don't know and I don't know what that's going to mean on the other side of of heaven when we get there are there going to be some people that were surprised you got here and are there going to be some people that were surprised that aren't there and all of it is left up for question and confusion because there was no fruit because their fruit never came to bear never matured it never became productive or maybe it did at one point but it just faded away we don't know so

I'd encourage you like the passage in 2 Peter chapter 1 to make sure of your calling an election it just means make sure that you're saved make sure that you're part of the family of God confirm that how do you do that by digging into the word of God by growing in your relationship with him and as you do that not only do you have assurance of your faith and a rock solid foundation by which you can stand and say yes I have this hope that is in heaven that is anchored there that just assures my soul and I know and guess what the people around you they can see that they can experience that so that when you die they have this great comfort and this great hope instead of the confusion and the questions of am I am I not because that was never the goal it's always fruitfulness bearing much fruit last one the only soil that we can cultivate you cannot cultivate someone else's soul you can share the word of

God with them you can provide encouragement but the only soil that you can truly cultivate is your own and that's the responsibility that you and I have for us to dig into the word to grow to make sure that my life is growing that my life is producing fruit I don't produce it the Holy Spirit produces it in me but allowing my life to be that kind of good soil that is fresh and turned over and produces wonderful fruit that that is the goal and that would be my prayer for all of us yes I'm going to pray for people to come to faith for people to get saved yes I'm going to pray for that for people in my life for people in your life when you say pastor which would you pray!

for so and so because they're not saved yet yes I'm going to pray for that but the thing that I'm going to pray for everyone else for all of us is that our lives would come to a place of bearing fruit much fruit and if our lives are doing that don't you just know that people around us are going to see that and people around us are going to come to faith in Christ and they're going to come to a point of saying yes Lord and I want to grow and I want to mature and I want my life to bear much fruit and it has an impact on the people in their life all of that that's what we're working toward and guess what it doesn't happen overnight it happens over years and decades of just faithful diligence just keeping at it

I don't have an expectation of oh boy my life has changed so much in the last year you know I confess I don't see that but if I look at ten years ago maybe five years ago twenty years ago man I'm a different guy and that's what our lives need to do to produce that kind of fruit Lord thank you so much for your word your word that teaches us and grounds us gives us a firm foundation Lord I pray for everyone that can hear my voice for those who are not saved whether here in the room or watching online Lord that you would impress upon their hearts the love that you have for them that you would send your only son to die in our place and to rise again from the dead that through his death the shedding of his blood on the cross that that was the payment for my sin for all of our sin and then

[48 : 48] Jesus rose again from the dead we thank you for that hope that's not just wishful thinking but as a rock solid anchor in heaven for us to hold on to I pray Lord for those who are saved that none of us would ever just accept being just saved that we would live a life in pursuit of fruit not that our lives are going to produce it we understand that it is you your Holy Spirit who produces the fruit in and through us but Lord we can provide a soil that you can use to grow who we are so that our lives would be transformed and conformed to the image of Christ that that's what people see in us a life that has been changed and may we be faithful to share this good news we we know what the secrets are they're not secrets or a mystery anymore you were crucified you rose again from the dead that is open knowledge for the world to see to understand may we be faithful in spreading that sharing that with the people in and around our lives so that they may too respond to that good news that their life might be changed

Lord that's what we're aiming for we know that that's what you want for us so many passages that describe what you're accomplishing in our lives thank you that you will never give up on us and you're going to bring this work to a completion and that is a promise that we can count on thank you Lord you are so faithful and so good to us and we love you and we praise you we ask it in Jesus name amen