

True and False Conversion

SUMMARY

This message explains why divorce, alcohol and drug addiction, immorality, and abortion are so prevalent within the church today. Are our churches really filled with true believers?

Transcript

I wonder if you have ever heard a testimony like this:

"I gave my heart to Jesus when I was a child. Then I became involved in drugs, robbery, muggings, rape, murder, pornography, torture, gambling, money laundering, adultery, perjury, treason, extortion...and other things I'd rather not mention. I was filled with anger, hatred, and greed. But all the time I knew the Lord and gave my heart back to Him when I was forty years old."

If you've heard something like that and said to yourself, "Something doesn't sound quite right about that," I trust that this teaching called "True and False Conversion" will shed light on that subject.

One hundred fifty years ago, a great preacher said, "Evermore the law must prepare the way for the gospel." He said, "To overlook this in instructing souls is almost certain to result in false hope"—people believing they are saved when they are not—"and the introduction of a false standard of Christian experience, and to fill the church with false converts." And then he said, "Time will make this plain." And it certainly has.

D. James Kennedy said, "The vast majority of people who are members of churches in America today are not Christians. I say that without the slightest fear of contradiction. I base it on empirical evidence of 24 years of examining thousands of people."

"D. James Kennedy said, 'The vast majority of people who are members of churches in America today are not Christians.'" [Share on Twitter](#) [Share on Facebook](#)

A. W. Tozer said, "It is my opinion that tens of thousands, if not millions, have been brought into some kind of religious experience by accepting Christ and they have not been saved."

And, of course, Jesus warned that on the Day of Judgment, many would come to Him and say, "Lord, Lord," and He will say, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you worker of iniquity" (Matthew 7:22,23). That word "iniquity" means "lawlessness." That Law is pivotal in conversion. How can a man repent if he does not know what sin is?

The Bible says, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). That is the same word: lawlessness." If there is no knowledge of sin—and Paul says, "I had not known sin but by the law" (Romans 7:7)—then there is no understanding that we have sinned against God and there will be no vertical repentance. Without repentance there is no salvation.

Bring Forth Fruit Unto God

Romans 7:4 says: "Wherefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

In our book *Hell's Best Kept Secret*, we share a story about a speedster. He was drunk and he drove through his hometown at a dangerous speed of 120 miles per hour. The town had no law against speeding, so they passed a law saying 65 miles per hour was the maximum speed. The speedster comes through again at 120 miles per hour, and this time he was in transgression. They grabbed him and leveled a \$6,000 fine against him.

With no money and no words in his defense, the youth was led off to prison. As he sat in prison with no hope, no means of payment, his father arrives at the door and says, "Son, I know you are guilty, but because I love you, I sold all my worldly goods to raise the money to pay the fine for you. You are free to go."

What then will the attitude of the youth be to the law? Well, he is dead to the law by the sacrifice of his father. His father paid his fine; now the law holds no dominion over him.

And what's his attitude now toward his father? Why, in the light of his father's sacrifice, he is filled with a humble gratitude at such a demonstration of love. Now he will bring forth the fruit of a new lifestyle that is pleasing in his father's sight. He will no longer be lawless.

Look at Romans 7:4 again: “Wherefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law by the body of Christ.” There is the sacrifice of the Father. The law has no dominion over the Christian. “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). The law holds no dominion because the Father paid the fine for us.

D. L. Moody said, “The law can only chase a man to Calvary, no further.” The Scripture says “that you should be married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Romans 7:4). So the law holds no dominion over us. We are filled with a humble gratitude to God for His mercy demonstrated in Christ—His wonderful sacrifice expressed in the cross—and now we bring forth the fruit of a new lifestyle that is pleasing to God. We are no longer workers of iniquity.

Characteristics of a True Convert

So what are the fruits of a new convert? Well, according Matthew 3:8, there is the fruit of repentance. If we are soundly saved, we will have evidence of repentance. Zacchaeus said, “Behold, Lord, I give half my goods to the poor; and if I have wronged anyone, I will pay back fourfold” (Luke 19:8).

Colossians 1:10: The fruit of good works. If you read the book of Titus, Titus continually says things like, “Let those who have believed in God be careful to maintain good works” (Titus 3:8). Jesus Himself said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Hebrews 13:15: The fruit of thanksgiving. Oh, once you’ve seen the cross, you will say, “O thanks be to God for the unspeakable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Galatians 5:22: The fruit of the Spirit. If you are soundly saved, if you are a genuine convert, you will manifest the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

Philippians 1:11: The fruit of righteousness. You will do that which is right. “He will lead you in the paths of righteousness” (Psalm 23:3).

And then Matthew 3:10 warns that “every tree that brings not forth good fruit”—not ordinary fruit, but good fruit—“will be cut down and cast into the fire.” So as witnesses of Christ we should do everything we can, not just to get church members, not just to get decisions or youth group members; but with God’s help, we must make sure that those we bring to the Savior have the things that accompany salvation (Hebrews 6:9).

The Key to Unlocking the Parables

Let’s now look at Mark 4:3. Whenever Scripture uses the word “hearken,” I once heard this said, it is like a little trumpet sounding, Hearken. It’s saying, “Listen carefully, something important is about to be said.” Same with the word “behold.” If you see the word “behold,” some great truth is going to be manifested.

But here in the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4 Jesus said, “Hearken; behold”—a double trumpet—“there went out a sower to sow. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred” (verses 3–8).

“The Parable of the Sower, which speaks of true and false conversion, is the key to unlock the mystery of all the other parables.” Share on Twitter Share on Facebook

And then Jesus gave the interpretation, and we know this is the preaching of the gospel and the seed falls on hard hearts, on stony-ground hearts, on thorny-ground hearts, and on good soil. But it seems the disciples didn’t understand what Jesus was speaking about. And this is what the Lord said to them: “Do you not know this parable? How then will you understand all parables?” (verse 13). In other words, the Parable of the Sower, which speaks of true and false conversion, is the key to unlock the mystery of all the other parables. Once we understand that when the gospel is preached there is true and false conversion, then the other parables begin to make sense. The sheep and the goats dwelling together—the true and the false. The foolish virgins and the wise—the true and the false together. The bad fish and the good fish drawn into the gospel net, sitting together. The wheat and the tares growing alongside one another.

Characteristics of a False Convert

The Parable of the Sower is also in Matthew 13 and Luke 8, so we are going to use the harmony of the Gospels to look at six characteristics of a false conversion.

Mark 4:5: There are immediate results with a false convert. That is, he hears the modern message of everlasting life and says, "I want that." There is no weighing of the issues. And yet Jesus said, "What man goes to war without checking out what the enemy's got? What man builds a tower without seeing if he's got enough materials?" (Luke 14:28-31).

Luke 8:6: There is a lack of moisture. There is no thirst for the living God.

Matthew 13:6: There is no root. There is no depth of godly character.

Mark 4:16: They received the word with gladness. And this is the key. You see, when the Law is not preached, sin is not seen as being exceedingly sinful. Paul said, "By the commandment, sin became exceedingly sinful" (Romans 7:13). And when sin is not seen in the light of what it is—being exceedingly sinful—there is no trembling before a holy God. There is no contrition, no sorrow for sin. So the false convert receives the word with gladness.

Matthew 13:20: They receive the word with joy. Their laughter isn't turned to mourning, and their joy isn't turned to heaviness (James 4:9).

Luke 8:13: For a while they do believe. They have a genuine "false conversion" experience.

Shielded from the Sunlight

Imagine two plants are growing alongside each other. One is a small plant and doesn't look very impressive; the other is a large plant and looks like it is growing very well. And if we had to pull a plant out to make room, most of us would say that the little plant is not doing very well, so let's pull it out and give that big plant plenty of room to grow. And then something interesting happens. The sun comes out and the little plant that didn't look very impressive seems to be thriving under the heat of the sunlight. The second plant, the big one, seems to be withering under the heat of the sun. If we could see through the soil, we would realize why this is happening: under the soil of the big plant there is bedrock, so it can't send its roots in deep after moisture.

Now, it was the sunlight that revealed what we couldn't see. We couldn't see the soil condition, but the sunlight revealed that there was something wrong under the soil.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. The sunlight in the spiritual—that which reveals what we cannot see—is tribulation (Matthew 13:21), temptation (Luke 8:13), and persecution (Mark 4:17). These three factors reveal what you and I cannot see: the heart condition of the professing convert. Now, if you purchase an expensive house plant, one of the worst things you can do is to take that plant home and say, "This plant cost me a lot of money, so I am going to keep it away from the sunlight. I am going to put it in a closet and shut the door." No, that is the worst thing that you can do. If you know what you are doing, you will put the plant in the sunlight and you will even rotate it to make sure it gets plenty of balanced light. In the same way, the worst thing that you and I can do with the new convert is shield him from the sunlight of tribulation, temptation, and persecution. If he is genuine, the sunlight will cause him to grow. If he is false, the sunlight will cause him to wither and die.

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Years ago, when Russia was under communism, the story is told of two Russian guards who burst into a prayer meeting, fully armed. They said, "If you are not prepared to die for your faith, get out of here!" And half of those professing Christians left. When the doors were closed, the guards put their guns down, got their Bibles out and said, "We are believers but we didn't want to risk fellowship until we sorted out the sheep from the goats."

If severe persecution fell upon the contemporary Church, if we had a Russian guard clean-out, the effect would be, first, that it would purify the Church. It would rid the Church of murmurers and complainers and those who cause division. But secondly and more importantly, it would reveal to the stony-ground hearer, the false convert, the error of his ways.

Can you imagine the tragedy of using the modern method of evangelism? That is, you preach the modern gospel—you go up to someone and say, "Excuse me, if you died tonight, would you have assurance that you would go to Heaven?" He says, "Well, I'd hope I would." And you say, "You can know that if you died tonight you would go to Heaven. Would you like me to share with you how you can know?" He says, "Yeah, sure."

And you say, "Well, Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins and He rose again on the third day. If you repent and put your faith in Him, you can pass from death to life today, and you can know that if you died tonight, you'd go straight to Heaven."

There is no preaching of future punishment. There is no mention of Judgment Day, the very reason that men are commanded to repent. There is no mention of Hell, there is no opening of the divine Law to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin. And you get a decision for Jesus, but you notice something isn't quite right. This guy has no zeal for the lost. He has no hunger for the Word. He doesn't really get into fellowship. And so you make it your job to make sure that he is continuing in his faith. You read his Bible to him, you take him to fellowship, etc.

You shield him from the sunlight of tribulation, temptation, and persecution. And you manage to do so right up until Judgment Day, when the eyes of a holy God burn their way into his guilty soul; when the books are opened and he stands before a holy, wrath-filled Law and he is exposed to be a worker of iniquity. What a tragedy that you shielded him from the sunlight! Wouldn't it have been better to stand back and let the sunlight reveal to him his true condition, rather than give him a false assurance that he is saved?

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For years, I spent my energies running after those who proved to be false converts, and I would say, "Are you reading your Bible?" You see, a true convert will desire the sincere milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2). He will say, "I rejoice at Your Word as one who finds great spoil" (Psalm 119:162). I'd say, "Are you getting into fellowship?" A true convert knows that he has passed from death to life because he loves the brethren (1 John 3:14). He will get himself into fellowship. He puts his hand to the plow and doesn't look back, because he is fit for the kingdom. In Luke 9:62 Jesus says, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom." That word "fit" in the Greek is *euthetos*, which means "ready for use." The soil of his heart was turned that he might receive the engrafted Word, which is able to save his soul (James 1:21).

Soundly Saved

This is going to sound a little radical, but if someone is soundly saved, he will never fall away. He will say with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). The true convert says, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day. He is able to keep me from falling and to present me faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (2 Timothy 1:12; Jude 1:24).

Listen to Psalm 26:1: "I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore, I will not slide."

Psalm 37:30,31: "The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." You see, that is a reference to the New Covenant. When someone is soundly saved, God says, "I will take My law and write it on his heart and cause him to walk in My statutes" (Ezekiel 36:27).

That's what happens when somebody is soundly saved. They have regard to the divine Law. No longer are they workers of iniquity. They don't lie, they don't steal, they don't kill, they don't commit adultery, they don't lust. They don't hate, they don't get angry without cause, they don't covet. It's those we erroneously call "backsliders" who fall away because they never slid forward in the first place. Scripture says, "According to the true proverb, the dog returns to his vomit and the pig goes back to its wallowing in the mire" (2 Peter 2:22).

Do you know why a pig goes back to wallowing in the mire? Is it because he is a dirty creature? No. He goes back to cool his flesh. That's why pigs get into the mire and wallow, and that's what happens with a false convert.

You see, the modern gospel does not use the Law as Jesus did. So the sinner is not crucified with Christ. Paul said, "The law was death to me" (Romans 7:13). It was the Law that killed me, Paul said.

If the Law is allowed to do its work, it drives us to the new life that is in Christ. It is only a matter of time before the false convert is drawn back to the filth of this world to cool his sinful flesh—because it is still alive within his heart. He has never been crucified with Christ.

George Whitefield said these words: "That is the reason we have so many mushroom converts"—that is, converts that spring up out of nowhere and then disappear—"because their stony ground is not plowed up. They have not got a conviction of the law."

Examine Yourself

Am I saying a genuine convert never sins? Of course not! A Christian, every Christian, has a battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. And sometimes he does fall into sin, but that's the point: he falls into sin, while the hypocrite, the false convert, dives into sin.

The Christian sins against his will, but the hypocrite, the false convert, makes provision for the flesh. If you've ever got up and said, "It's Monday, today I'll sin," then you are making provision for the flesh and you need to examine yourself and see if you are in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5).

A Christian falls and the hypocrite dives. That's the difference between the true and the false, the Christian and the hypocrite, life and death, and Heaven and Hell.

"That's the difference between the true and the false, the Christian and the hypocrite, life and death, and Heaven and Hell."Share on TwitterShare on Facebook

A young man once sat in my office and said, "Ray, I've been looking at you guys, and I don't have what you've got. I have no zeal for the lost. I don't have a hunger for the Word. Something is wrong in my Christian walk."

I asked him, "Do you have love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, faith, meekness, and temperance?" (Galatians 5:22). And he said "No" to seven of the nine fruits of the Spirit. So I said, "By your own confession, I don't see any evidence that you are soundly saved."

Now at that point he did exercise the fruit of self-control. Because he told me later that he wanted to rearrange my face. But instead of doing that he went home, examined himself to see if he was in the faith, concluded that he wasn't, and got on his knees and repented before a holy God. And within three months he was such a fruit bearer that he was entrusted with a ministry within our church.

False Converts in the Church

Colossians 4:5 says, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." I used to think, "Okay, I will walk in wisdom toward them that are without...the church." But the false convert sits within the church—the tares growing alongside the wheat, the bad fish alongside the good. They are without (outside) the body of Christ but they are in the midst of God's people.

The false converts will waste your time. They will be hearers of the Word and not doers (James 1:22). And I have spent hours and hours counseling those who prove to be false converts—just wasting my time. And I came to realize that they didn't need counsel, they needed repentance. Remember that big plant as it began to wither? If we looked at it and said, "Something is wrong there; I am going to get fertilizer and put it on the top leaf or branch," is that going to help it?

No! It doesn't need fertilizer, it needs good soil. And the false convert does not need the fertilizer of counsel. He needs the repentant soil of a good and honest heart before God.

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Years ago, I was one of the pastors of a very large church and the senior pastor was really skinny. And he used to make jokes about it. He had only one stripe on his pajamas. He used to run around in the shower to get wet. And he said, "I eat and eat and eat, and I never put on weight!" I think he had his glorified body.

He was about six feet something and about 120 pounds—a very slight man—and I tell you that for a reason. This pastor had a shepherd's heart; he just loved the flock. He would take up a lamb in his arms and just so love his people. He was a very godly man, filled with the fruit of God's Spirit. One night there was knock at the door of his home at 3 a.m.

One of his teenage sons got up and opened the door. It was some guy wanting counsel—at 3 o'clock in the morning. But knowing his father's heart, the son didn't hesitate to go to the bedroom, knock on the door and say, "Father, someone wants counsel." He said, "I'll be out in a minute. Tell him to wait the living room."

So the father got up, got dressed, came down the hallway, and walked into the living room. And as he stepped into the room, a 14-inch machete blade came down upon that pastor and so sliced into him that when his two teenage sons heard him scream and rushed in, they found his blood around the walls of the living room.

They thought their father had been killed. They just about killed the guy who did it. The guy was a very angry man. The next day another pastor called me and said, "Ray, did you hear what happened last night?" and I said, "Yeah...heavy." He said, "Heavy? That guy went to my church!" Then he added, "Fancy that—another Christian doing that to the pastor!"

I said, "Hang on a minute. If some guy tries to cut the head off a senior pastor, you could probably come to the conclusion that he lacks somewhat in the area of love, goodness, gentleness, self-control."

We have got to stop embracing everyone who names the name of Christ and saying, “You are a Christian; you’ve given your heart to Jesus.” The Bible speaks of false brethren, false apostles, false prophets, false teachers, and true and false conversion.

A Fruitless Tree

I was walking along the street once, and as I was about to cross the street I stepped onto the road and heard KRRRRRRR KURR. I looked around and saw a car coming down the middle of the road. It didn’t have a muffler and was making a terrible KURRRR KURR noise. So I jumped back off the road, and as the car screamed past me it suddenly slammed on its anchors, which is a Down-Under colloquialism meaning he stopped. And he backed up, URRR URR-RR, and a gentleman got out. Now I wished I’d had a video camera because this was a classic stony-ground hearer. I knew this guy had threatened pastors in the inner city. I noticed he had three Jesus stickers on the front windshield of his car. As he stepped out, his shirt was unbuttoned to his navel and in the midst of his hairy chest—a bit of jealousy there...I confess that—amidst the bush there was this great big wooden cross. He said, “Ray, can I see you for some counsel?” I told him I was busy for that decade.

You see, a false convert will try to impress you with branches and leaves because he lacks fruit. Listen to Matthew 7:15–18: “Beware of false prophets,” Jesus said, “which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit.” Now listen to His words: “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.”

“Oh, So-and-So has given his heart to Jesus. He’s coming along okay except he keeps beating up his wife.” No, no. “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (verse 18). A fountain cannot bring forth sweet water and bitter water, and Scripture says, “Every tree that brings not forth good fruit will be hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore, by their fruits you shall know them” (verses 19,20). Folks, we need to do what Scripture says: to know them by their fruits. In Acts 20:29 Paul says, “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” And then Paul says, “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (verse 30). Of your own selves. And you start looking at the background of weird sects, such as David Koresh and Jim Jones, and you will find they once “gave their hearts to Jesus.”

The Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith and begin listening to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils (1 Timothy 4:1). You look at the backgrounds of those who are into the occult, or into heavy metal, occultic rock music, and do a little digging, and you will often find they are sad products of the modern gospel—false converts.

Again, the true convert will never even look back, according to Jesus, let alone depart from the faith. If he finds himself in a lion’s den, he doesn’t hold his fist to the heavens. He gets on his knees before God. Fiery furnaces, lion’s dens, and Red Seas will establish, strengthen, and settle the true convert (1 Peter 5:10). The genuine believer brings forth fruit with patience (Luke 8:15). In other words, with the genuine convert there is not spectacular, quick growth. Why? Because the roots are going deep into the soil of God’s Word and drawing up the moisture. The reason there was quick growth with that plant on bedrock was that the goodness that should have been going into the root system was being pushed into the branches and leaves.

Same with the false convert. You’ve got two people who have made decisions for Christ in your church. One guy is a trophy of grace. He says “Amen” and “Hallelujah” louder than anyone else in the church. He carries a BIG Bible. He has more stickers, wear flashier T-shirts, and has “Jesus saves” tattooed in all-caps on his forehead.

The other guy who made a decision for Christ sits in the front row listening to every word that’s preached and is always taking notes. Always taking notes. He is practicing closet prayer, confession of sin, returning things that he’s stolen, going to his parents and apologizing for dishonoring them. He’s bringing forth fruit with patience, sending the roots deep down into God’s Word. Suddenly, Loud Mouth falls away, while Humble Heart remains faithful. What’s happened? The sunlight of tribulation and temptation causes the false convert to wither and the true convert to send his roots deep into God and His Word.

“The sunlight of tribulation and temptation causes the false convert to wither and the true convert to send his roots deep into God and His Word.”[Share on Twitter](#)[Share on Facebook](#)

In Luke 10:3, Jesus did something totally contrary to modern evangelism: He sent His lambs among wolves! That is so contrary to what we do with those who make decisions for Christ. “Oh, he’s made a decision—keep him away from his old friends!” No, no, no. Let the sunlight of tribulation, temptation, and persecution come upon him. If he’s genuine, he will grow. If he’s false, he will wither and die.

Judas: Genuine or False?

Some people think Judas was a Christian who loved the Lord and he somehow backslid. Well, was Judas genuine or false? Jesus said, "One of you is a devil" (John 6:70). There's a good clue.

Well, should we run around looking for Judases, and if we see them, throw them out of the church? If we see a tare, should we pull it out? No, Jesus said don't do that, because if you run around pulling out tares you may pull out a wheat (Matthew 13:28,29). Don't do that; just leave them. On Judgment Day, God will sort out the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares. Because we really, truly don't know. Only God truly knows the genuine from the false.

A friend of mine said every time he'd see a painting of The Last Supper, he'd look for Judas: big hook-nose, warts, down on the end counting money. But that's so contrary to Scripture. Judas was probably as good looking as me—he was probably good looking. When a woman broke an alabaster box of expensive ointment, one of the disciples complained, "Why wasn't this sold and the money given to the poor?" That was Judas, because he cared for the poor. No, he didn't. The Bible tells us he was a worker of iniquity: he was the treasurer, and he was stealing money from Jesus and the disciples (John 12:4-6).

Judas was a hypocrite, but he hid it so well that when Jesus said, "One of you will betray Me," the disciples didn't say, "Oh, yah, there's old hook-nose down there; that's no surprise to me..." They didn't say that. They suspected themselves rather than the honest treasurer who cared for the poor. They said, "Is it I, Lord? Is it me?" Jesus said, "It is he who puts the sop in the dish" (Matthew 26:21-23): Judas. The disciples didn't realize it was him even then. When he went out to betray Jesus, some of them thought he had gone to give money to the poor. He hid it well...from the disciples, but not from God. And you and I may hide it, from those around us, but not from God.

Listen to Colossians 4:7-14, and notice how Paul puts a seal of approval on certain believers. He says, "All my state shall Tychicus declare to you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord." Well, there's a word of approval, a seal of approval, on Tychicus. He's a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. With Onesimus, "a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you." See, when Christians were being martyred for their faith, it's important that there was a seal of approval on believers. When you write a letter you say, "He's one of you; you can trust him."

"Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, touching whom you've received commandments, if he comes to you, receive him." There's an endorsement.

"Epaphras, who is one of you"—again, a seal of approval—"a servant of Christ, salutes you."

And Luke, who needed no approval, "a beloved physician."

And then Paul said, "And Demas greets you." It's as though Paul looked at Demas and said, "Uh, I really don't know about you. I can't see any fruit in your life." And further over in Scripture, in 2 Timothy 4:10, we see Scripture says, "For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." A false convert.

Refined in the Fire

A group of about 200 people moved out of a church building into another building that had been a jewelry factory. As they started cleaning it up and had gathered a pile of dust, someone had the good sense to say, "Hey, take this dust to a refinery." So they took it to a gold refinery. Because it was a jewelry factory, there might be something precious in the dust. Well, the dust yielded \$8,500 worth of gold dust.

The refinery asked, "Got any carpet?" "Yes, we've got a 12-foot-square piece." They said, "Bring it in and we'll burn it." It yielded \$3,500 worth of gold dust. They even got \$350 worth of dust from the roof.

God often sends us to the refinery because He wants to purify us. Look at 1 Peter 1:6,7: "Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be..."—God will only put you in the sunlight if need be; it's for your good—"you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found to the praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Psalm 66:10-12: "For you, O God, have proved us. You have tried us as silver is tried. You brought us into the net. You laid affliction on our loins. You caused men to ride over our heads. We went through fire and through water, but You brought us out into a wealthy place."

"God takes us through fire, not to burn us but to purify us. He takes us through water, not to drown us but to cleanse us." [Share on Twitter](#) [Share on Facebook](#)

God takes us through fire, not to burn us but to purify us. He takes us through water, not to drown us but to cleanse us. And if you and I are genuine in our faith, we can say, "This light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us"—not against us—"a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Let me pinpoint what I am trying to say. The great determining factor in whether we, with God's help, produce true or false converts is the right use of the Law of God. Let me repeat that. The great determining factor in whether we produce genuine or false converts comes back to whether or not we imitate Jesus, follow in the way of the Master, and use the Law lawfully to bring the knowledge of sin.

"The great determining factor in whether we, with God's help, produce true or false converts is the right use of the Law of God."Share on TwitterShare on Facebook

Remember the words of that great preacher 150 years ago? He warned,

"Evermore the law must prepare the way for the gospel. To overlook this in instructing souls is almost certain to result in false hope, the introduction of a false standard of Christian experience, and to fill the church with false converts. Time will make this plain."