

The Hidden Treasure Found

Tim Conway | illbehonest.com

...Spiritual dagger into the heart of what I think is some of the satanic confusion that people have been having lately as to whether they are saved or not. No doubt, if you're a part of this church or have been around here, had any doings with us, you're aware that some people have thought they're saved, then thought they're not saved, then thought they're saved again. And it seems that I don't know of anything that's really much more simple, more direct, more plain, than the picture that we have here in this parable that portrays true Christianity. I think a lot of times people get hung up with a lot of things, and I think that in very simple fashion, Jesus brings this whole thing right down to a simple matter. In very simple picture, He portrays for us something that I think ought to be helpful and foundational to us as a church.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field." I mean, really, you can just stop at those words. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure..." This is the all wise, all knowing Jesus Christ. The One Who created Heaven and earth. The One Who He Himself is divine. The God-man. The One Who sees things, weighs things, knows things as they truly are. He says, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure..." He made man. He knows what is most satisfying to man. He knows what's most pleasing to man, what's most beautiful to man, what ultimately is going to bring man the greatest amount of joy. He knows what is truly the greatest treasure for man. He knows what it is. He is a man Himself. He has become one. He has robed Himself with our flesh, with our feelings, with our understanding of things. He has subjected Himself to the creature realm. He Himself Who made man becomes man. If anybody knows, the Creator of man and One Who has in turn become man and subjected Himself to all of our wants, all of our desires, all of our passions, if anybody has authority to say the way things really are and what is treasure and what is not treasure, it is the Lord Jesus Christ. Be sure of that. When He says, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure," brethren, we ought to sit up and take notice, and say if He says that, this is treasure indeed. This is something I need to have. This is something that is going to be very good for me. This is something that is going to satisfy me and bring me joy. This is something that I ought to give my attention to. This is not something I ought to blow off. When the Lord Jesus says something is treasure, for you to say, "Well, I don't think it is. I think something else is." That is the height of foolishness, folks. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

Now, brethren, the picture here is very simple. Jesus paints for us basically a scene. It's one of a man. I don't know what this man was doing. He was doing something that brought him on to another man's field and allowed him to discover treasure that was hidden there. Could be a path across the man's property and somehow he found himself walking there. Probably if there was a path, others would have maybe possibly discovered it before him. Maybe he was just kind of wandering across somebody's land. Possibly, he was working for the man who owned it. We really don't know. You know, he could have been plowing. He could have been digging. He could have been doing something in the earth that would have allowed him to find a treasure that would be buried on another man's land.

Anyways, Jesus doesn't get into the details. Obviously, they're not important. What is important is the fact that this man discovers treasure. He sees it's treasure. He knows it's treasure. And it is very valuable in his sight. It's buried in this field.

Now, we can imagine presumably the treasure was hidden there before the present owner owned the land. In other words, the treasure doesn't belong to the present owner because as we see in the parable, this man goes and sells all that he has so that he can buy the land to get the treasure. And if the land owner knew that the treasure was there, he might not, one, sell the land, or two, even if he sold the land, he'd get the treasure first, right? So obviously, the assumption is that the owner of the land doesn't know that the treasure's there. It's basically been buried.

Now, look, this was in a day when there weren't banks and savings and loans and all that kind of stuff. Typically in those days, people, if they had something worth money, they would hide it somewhere. And of course, the ground is a great place to hide it. Very difficult to find things in the ground. In fact, obviously, so difficult that somebody probably died and then his family wasn't able to find it. Either they never knew there was a treasure or he went and died - anyways, we don't even know what led up to the fact it was there, but obviously the present owner doesn't know it's there.

So here he is. He finds this treasure. It's buried. And rather than just taking it, he doesn't take it. It seems that he's an honorable man. He does the honorable thing. Rather than just stealing it, running off with it, he covers it up. He goes and sells all that he has to get enough money to then go to the owner, buy the field which has now become really valuable to the man since, you know, upon buying the field, he of course, acquires the treasure buried in the field. It's the treasure he has his heart set on - a treasure that in his estimation is far more valuable than all he has, right? I mean, you don't go sell all that you have to get a treasure that is worth less than all you have. That's a bad bargain, folks. You don't do that.

So, there's the basic picture. So how about an interpretation? What does this mean? Now, in my life, since I've been a Christian in my twenty years, I have heard two possible interpretations. Now let me give you the first one and the one that I don't think it is, because you may come across this from time to time. This is what I don't think it is. But some have suggested that the man in this parable is supposed to represent Jesus Christ. The field is the world. Jesus is walking through the world discovering His people whom He finds to be so valuable that He's willing to go to the cross and give all that He has to redeem these people.

Now, I did notice that Spurgeon in his exposition of Matthew does actually present both interpretations - this one and the one I'm about to give to you. It's obvious in the last thing he says that he probably leans towards the one that I think is right, but he does throw them both out there. So even Spurgeon may suggest this one. So you may hear it from time to time that basically the man is Jesus. The field's the world. And He's going and giving everything that He has and dying on the cross to redeem these people. I don't think that feels right. I don't believe that's the proper interpretation. And I'll show you why I don't think that's right.

Basically, I want you to notice the next parable. The next parable is in the very next verse. Matthew 13:45-46. We have a parable that's very similar to this one about the treasure. "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls who on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had and bought it." Now look, both of these

parables appear intended to convey the same truth, right? I mean, notice, you basically have the same thing happening here. Man finds something valuable, goes and sells all that he has so that he can get what he finds valuable. But, they do vary slightly. In fact, the one significant point in which they are different, in the one you have a treasure that's accidentally discovered, while in the next, you have a pearl that is found by one who has purposely and diligently given his life to searching for fine pearls. You see the difference. One, a man discovers a treasure that he didn't know was there before. That was totally done on accident. There's no indication he was looking for treasure. Basically, there was treasure hidden in a field and the man found it. It was hidden. He found something that was hidden. And then in the other, you have a merchant in search of fine pearls.

Both cases: response of those doing the finding is exactly the same. Both go and sell all that they have to buy the thing that is highly prized. But look, though the response is the same, the manner in which the treasures were discovered is not the same. One finds it by accident. One finds it on purpose.

Now think about what this means if Christ is supposed to be the man in these parables. I think that presents us a problem because basically it would seem to imply that Jesus Christ basically goes through this world and some of His people He finds on purpose. Some He finds just kind of by accident. He just happens to discover them. While others, He's specifically searching for. I don't think that's the way we want to interpret that.

Brethren, I can tell you this, the Bible never teaches us that Jesus finds any of His people by accident. In fact, if you listen to what John was saying in the Sunday School - did you ever notice that Jesus says - it wasn't one of His disciples, it didn't just happen to happen, it wasn't just a good idea to take a little vacation over there to the Decapolis area. Did you see what Jesus said there? He said, "Let us go over there." Isn't it very interesting that if you follow that whole thing out, do you know that all that Jesus Christ did when He went over there was to find this guy, save him, put him in his right mind and then He left? That's all He did. You go through that account. He didn't go to the mall. He didn't go shopping. He wasn't over there buying pigs and swine. When He said, "Let's go over there," He went over there and He did one thing. He had a man who He was purposed to go save. Brethren, that comes up repeatedly in the Scriptures. You may not notice it, but I can tell you this, in John 4:4, like the old King James says, "He must needs go through Samaria." Why? Because there was a woman who was going to meet Him at the well who was a daughter of Zion and who He was going to save. And there were other Samaritans there that He was going to buy with His blood and He went there on purpose. Jews did not go through Samaria. They went around Samaria. And here He is, He must go. Why must He go? Because on purpose He seeks out - you know the Scripture says, "The Lord knows His own." He doesn't walk through life and just happen to discover: Oh! You must be Mine! He goes to them on purpose! "Zacchaeus, this day I must eat at your house." Why? Because you are one of Mine. And salvation is coming to this house today. Brethren, that's how Christ goes through the world. So this idea that He just kind of accidentally stumbles upon - brethren, I don't think that stands up.

And one last thing that I would say just with regards to why my thinking is that that is not the proper interpretation is because it doesn't say that the man somehow makes the treasure valuable. He comes and he finds a treasure that's buried there that's already valuable, right?

The treasure was valuable before the guy got there. It already had a preciousness. It already had a worth. It already was treasure! Brethren, it's hard to argue the case that any of us were treasure before Christ found us. In fact, I read somewhere like in Romans 3 that it says we were worthless. While we were yet sinners, He went and gave all on that cross for us, brethren. While we were yet sinners - it doesn't say while we were treasure. Now look, it is most definitely true that He makes us into His treasure. But it's by His making. It's true He pours His love on us and He calls us such things as guilty sinners, brethren, who can understand the love of God, the such things that God calls us in His Word and that Jesus calls us. You know, there is a psalm where we are called His treasured ones. And we are, brethren, those that in Zephaniah it says He will sing over. He is not ashamed to own us. He loves us. He has put an everlasting love upon us. The bride of Christ, dwelling place of the Spirit, children of God. Brethren, behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us... it's indescribable. I'm not saying any of that, but brethren, when He finds us, we're not like that. He makes us - isn't that what Ephesians 5 is all about? He takes us as like a bride and He cleanses us. He gets the dirt out. He gets the filth out. He washes it. So brethren, those are the reasons that I say I don't think that works in that parable.

Okay, well, if we rather interpret the men in both these parables as us and the treasure as Christ, I think it makes a whole lot more sense. Look, it appears these parables teach that men who really become convinced about the value of the Kingdom of Heaven will give up everything to win Christ regardless of whether they stumble upon it almost by accident or whether they've been searching for years for the truth. You see what I'm saying? That makes sense. Because that's reality.

The truth is we can look around even at people right in this room, and some of you would say, like me, I wasn't looking for God. Brethren, I was not looking for God. I was like this guy in v. 44. I'm going through life and I am not looking. And suddenly, it's like, bang! I stub my toe on this treasure chest, reach down, open it up, and it's whoa! Brethren, when God first saved me I was going to people: I can't even believe this is real! I can't even believe this existed! It never even entered my mind there were such things as this. I thought my family, my friends, they are going to believe this in a second and all I've got to do is just tell them. They were just like me. None of them know. They just don't even realize. I mean, here, I stumbled upon it. And they all thought I was a fool.

But then there's other people, like I remember Brother Pat Horner. Basically, he wasn't a Catholic like me. He really did the Catholic stuff. And then he went from that and he searched over in Mormonism and then he went to this. And basically, there was this process. I think it's a lot like the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul - he was seeking to keep that law. He was reading the Word of God. He was searching. He was looking. That you had law, you had his Phariseism, you had his circumcision, born of this tribe. And all the way through, and he's doing this and doing this and doing this, and at one time he was alive and he's going along. See, he's more like the guy searching for the pearls of great price. He was there looking in religion. He was trying to find it. Brethren, I wasn't there.

You see, that makes more sense in both these parables. Because we go around this room, some of you were like me. You weren't even looking for it. Others of you, well, you were involved in this religion, you went over to that one. Matt was over there with the Jehovah's

Witnesses. He was searching and he was looking for something, and then in John 1:1, BOOM! He found it! There it was! The pearl of great price. And Matt said, "Yes! That's it! Christ Who is God!" Brethren, this makes sense.

Spurgeon talks about one guy after a night of hard drinking on Saturday night, he was walking by. It hadn't even entered his mind. He wasn't there for any purpose to come to church. He's walking by, probably slept in the gutter, just stayed up in the tavern all night. He's going home all hungover, still partially drunk. He's walking by the Metropolitan Tabernacle. And all of a sudden, he glances over [and something] prompts him to walk in there. He sits down and God saved him during that sermon. Brethren, that's finding the Treasure when you weren't looking for it. He's just walking home. He's just trying to figure out what street he's on, and suddenly, the Prize, the Treasure of all treasures is set before him. And God opens his eyes to behold the beauty of that thing. Brethren, that's what it appears Jesus is teaching here. Whether men find it by accident, find it by searching, that man, that woman who finds the Kingdom of Heaven and recognizes its true worth will give up everything to win Christ.

Now, someone might say, hey, wait a second. There's only one problem with that interpretation. If that's indeed the way we're supposed to interpret this parable, then doesn't it seem like it's saying the Kingdom of Heaven can be bought? I mean, we understand Jesus bought, He paid for the redemption of His people. But if you're going to make it sound like that, you have a guy that basically goes and sells all that he has - he sells. It almost seems like he sells everything so that he can go buy the field. There's this buying, this purchasing aspect here. Doesn't that kind of break down there? Folks, I don't think so. I think this parable is teaching exactly the same truth that we see in a number of places in the New Testament, such as Luke 14:33.

Why don't you turn there? Luke 14:33. I believe that this is exactly the same truth that we have flowing out of this parable in Matthew 13:44. Luke 14:33. "So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce..." Now if you have different translations here, some of them say, "Whoever does not give up..." "Whoever does not forsake..." The Holman Christian even says, "Whoever does not say goodbye to..." I think it was the Holman. "Whoever does not give up all that he has cannot be My disciple." Brethren, that's the real issue of the parable. The man, look, it's not so much that he had to sell and get money to buy. I don't believe that's the emphasis of the parable. The emphasis is that the man had to renounce all that he had in order to get the treasure. Even though the parable contains buying and selling terminology, the real issue is this: if this man had counted anything in his possessions more valuable than the treasure, and held it back, he would not have gotten the treasure.

This is the same thing we find with Moses over in Hebrews 11:26. You guys turn over there. Hebrews 11:26. Brethren, I believe that this parable is the defining word, it is the definitive word on Christianity. And I believe that that's what Jesus says in Luke 14:33. That is the definitive word: surrender. I surrender all because this Treasure is worth surrendering it all for. Not that I can purchase it with it, but Christ will have no competitors. But the thing is, brethren, if you'll see Christ for what He is, He needs no competitors! Because He really is that much infinitely more valuable than anything you have.

And here's the eyes of one named Moses open to the same reality. Hebrews 11:26, "Moses, he considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt." There

it is again, words like wealth, treasure. It's come down to what a man prizes most. I'll tell you what's going on here. Look at this word: "he considered." That's always the issue, is it not? A man considers. A man thinks. A man sizes this up. Moses considered. Moses counted. He calculated. That's what the man in the parable's doing. When you get the buying and selling, it's not so much an emphasis - I don't think Jesus wants the emphasis on the buying and selling. It's got more to do with a man calculating. It's a calculated worth. That's what it's about. You get costs and buying and selling and accounting figures because it comes down to this every time. It's a calculation. It's a counting. It's a considering. A man measures. A man weighs out.

And in the end, what does Moses do? Moses counted Christ and the necessary reproach of being associated with Christ as greater wealth than all the treasure of Egypt. What you find in Moses, he's convinced that in Christ, he had found a thing of great value. He was convinced its worth was such that he could sacrifice - you remember in his day, Egypt was the powerhouse on the face of this earth. Egypt had the power, the wealth, the dominion in that day. The Egyptian empire was that which much like America today, brethren, they had the wealth. And he, if you remember, was plucked out of that river by Pharaoh's daughter. He had access. Folks, there's a great likelihood here that he was heir to such things as would boggle our minds when it came to earthly wealth. And he basically looked at that and he said - not only that, he didn't only have the wealth, he had the power. Brethren, he was a prince in Egypt. And he had no doubt access to everything that man desires in this physical realm. And he looked at it and it says that he considered, he calculated, he weighed it out. Others might have thought he was a fool. Moses, you are a fool! You give all of that up to hang out with God's people and suffer all the reproach and all the loss. Moses! You're going to go out into the wilderness for 40 years and you're going to eat manna out there, barely get enough water. It's going to have to come out of rocks. You're going to basically live in the desert for 40 years. What are you doing? You'd give it all up for the first 40 years tending sheep out there in sight of this Mount Sinai. Now you're going to spend 40 more years with a bunch of rebels out there in the desert! You could have been in palaces in Egypt.

And look, Moses does not see in his day what you see! He didn't have the Gospel of John. He didn't have the Gospel of Matthew. He didn't have the epistle of Romans and the epistle to the Hebrews. He does not know the truth about Christ you know. He had these slight little revelations comparatively. And he looked at it and he sized it up and he said I want that. I'm taking that. I see enough of it to know, I have computed this thing out, and that by far is more worthy than the riches of Egypt. Brethren, this is the same logic, the same counting, and the same calculation that we have in the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3 - turn there.

Philippians 3:7. Again, brethren, I want you to notice the accounting, the buying/selling, the type of terminology that's used here. Philippians 3:7-8. "Whatever gain I had I counted as loss." We have gain and loss. Just like an accounting ledger. "Whatever gain I had..." Paul, what gain did you have? We can understand what gain Moses had. What gain did you have? He said when it came to the religious circles, I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. When it came to the law, I kept it. I was circumcised the eighth day. I was of the tribe of Benjamin. I was a Jew, folks. I was a Jew. And I was at the height of the Jewish religion. I outdistanced others. I outran others. I out-excelled others. I had honors beyond others. I basically was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. I was in the upper echelon. I was noted for my piety in the Jewish religion. I had all

that. I had all the honors. All the credentials. Sat at the feet of Gamaliel. I was well taught, well instructed, went to the right seminary. I had all of it when it came to religion. And he says, "I counted it all as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything..." - not just those things - everything! All my possessions, all wealth, all the worldly goods, all the worldly honors, all the worldly credentials, all of it, I count it all, everything as loss "because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish." Brethren, the word "rubbish" is dung. It is excrement. "...In order that I may gain Christ." You see those words: gain, loss, I counted, worth. Paul is doing calculations here just like with Moses. The worth of Christ is preeminent and all other gain is loss in comparison. Everything else is counted as dung.

That doesn't mean that everything else is dung. Paul knew the worth of the shirt on his back. I mean, he knew that it was good to be able to possess a pen to write with when he wrote to the different churches. He knew that having clothes to wear was a good thing, and having food to eat was a good thing. But when Paul took up the spiritual scales and he put Christ in one side and everything else - all the honors, all the riches, all the religion, everything in the other side, it's like nothing. That scale falls down. Nothing you can put on the other side even makes the scale flinch. It is bottomed with Christ on this side. He looks at it and he says there is my calculation. I have seen what Christ has to offer me. He offers me full atonement, eternal peace and rest and life. He offers me forever and forever and forever the pleasures and the paradises of this. He says this isn't even a comparison here.

Brethren, listen, when it all comes down to it at the end of the day when you clear all the trash, all the rubble, all the stuff, all the trivialities, all the little hangings and everything, brethren, when you move the church steeples aside and all the pews and all the stuff, all the singing - oh brethren, it's easy to come in and sing somewhere, especially the way God has blessed us to sing here. It's easy to come in and get all emotional about that, but brethren, I'm telling you, at the end of the day when you clear it all away, it comes down to this basic reality. Brethren, this attitude that you see displayed here, that you see in this parable, you see in Luke 14, you see in Moses, you see in Paul, this attitude explains Christianity. Bottom line. Christians are what they are, they think how they think, they do what they do because the Christian is thoroughly persuaded that when all the riches of Egypt, all the riches of being a Jew, all the riches that a 21st century American can possess, when they're all tallied up and compared to Christ, the Christian says what are these things to me? Brethren, when we're in Christ, we have found the immeasurable riches, the full atonement, joy unspeakable, life eternal.

Brethren, when we find Christ... that's how I was 20 years ago! I mean, here I am walking along. I knock my toe on this chest. I reach down, I open it up, and boom! Such glory comes out at me! Whoa! Everything my heart has ever desired, everything to satisfy a man, everything to wash away the guilt of my sin. Everything to fill me up to overflowing. Everything that ever I have wanted, desired, longed for - this fulfills it all! And brethren, that explains why Christians do what they do. Because they come across that very thing. They say this is treasure indeed. And they'll make any and every sacrifice to insure that they get this treasure, this pearl of great price and to have it forever.

Brethren, again, is this not what explains the Christian? This utterly explains how the Christians could be singing as they're going to the fire. This utterly explains the story you've

heard before, it comes out of Foxe's Book of Martyrs, where the woman was told: Say that the king is head of the church. And she said Christ is Head of the church. And they'd hold her little baby up at those bars crying in her dungeon cell and say refuse that Christ is the King of the church and say that the King of England is the head of the church and we'll give you your child. And in the end, she never saw her child again. And she died in that dungeon. Why? Brethren, it's this parable that explains how a woman whose affections - you ask one of these young mothers here how it would be to have their one-year-old, six-month-old, three-month-old pried out of their arms and to have you on one side of a cell door and that baby hung up by some cruel soldier on the other side, the baby's screaming wanting its mother, and told all you have to do is deny Christ and you will have your child. Brethren, this explains why that woman said in her tears and her anguish and her sorrow: Christ is the Head of the church.

Brethren, this explains it. This explains how Paul - have you ever thought about it? Paul is stoned to where they think he's dead. And he gets up and he goes back into the city, the same city where the people just stoned him. Why do you do it, Paul? Because Christ is worth more to me than life. Brethren, that explains the Christian. That explains why some Christians give 90% of their money away.

I remember my dad after I was first saved, one of the things God just put in my heart is I want to give, I want to give, I want to give. My dad would tell me, "You're a fool." That man is no fool, brethren, when he is absolutely convinced of this and he hears Christ's words, and he knows there's treasure in Heaven, and he knows the greatest Treasure is Christ, and he knows there will definitely be something there at the end of this, something that is absolutely glorious, absolutely out of this world. Brethren, that explains why people do it. People do it when they're persuaded of something. Brethren, you know why true Christianity is so radical? It's because of this right here. It's this. It drives men. It moves men.

Brethren, this explains missionaries. Can you explain to me a missionary that would ever want to go to India? John talked about Calcutta. It was amazing when he brought up seeing a naked man pass him on the street, immediately my mind shot and I thought: Calcutta. Because I saw there was a man there in Calcutta that I saw in that state. And then I got to thinking, hey, wait, I wasn't even there with John when he saw that. We saw that at two separate occasions. Brethren, that place stinks. That place is hellish. That place has so much darkness. That place is hot. When William Carey was there, he never felt a good Northern stiff breeze on his face for 40 years. What in the world would possess a man to go to a place that is full of malaria, full of dengue, sweat, hot house, jungle atmosphere among cannibals and go and risk their life, risk their children, and in fact, many of those guys lost their wives, lost their children.

You just read the stories of Adoniram Judson. You read the stories, brethren. They lost their kids. They lost their wives. They lost their health. Can you imagine Adoniram Judson hanging there in a jail for two years upside down, feet in the air, blisters all over the bottoms of them, eaten by mosquitoes, the place is horrible, you don't get fed unless family brings you food. Why? Why? He told his first wife's father, you send her with me. Let me take her and likely, you'll never see her again. She's likely to be submitted to such things and such cruel trials over in this place. And he said, okay. What explains the Stam parents when word came back to them that their son and their daughter-in-law had been beheaded for the sake of Christ? Why could

they through tears praise the Lord? Brethren, it comes back to confidence. This explains the Christian.

I'll tell you this, why does somebody come here to Fatty's? They're used to living in nice houses, being in rich places, being in well-to-do churches where they've got all the stuff, all the amenities, all of everything. And listen, there are true children of God in other places. Definitely. Absolutely. But why would some of you come here? Brethren, it comes down to this, there is not a good human explanation why a bunch of people would want to come here to Fatty's on the east side to do what we do. It's craziness. People look at it and they want nice places, plush carpet, nice seats. They want beauty, they want riches, they want to feel the wealth of the place. Why come into this place? This part of town? There's better scenery than this old building across the street.

Brethren, [it] utterly explains Christianity. The focus of this parable has nothing to do with buying salvation. It has everything to do with what a man or a woman values and puts worth on. And when a man values the Kingdom of Heaven, do you want it more than you want anything else? Brethren, this comes down to it. We don't have to play games. You know what, in the end, we've had people floating around and well, am I in? Am I out? Am I lost? People want to feel saved, but some days I don't feel saved. They want to measure themselves up to this Christian standard. And some days they measure up. Some days they don't. Brethren, right down at the root of it comes this: Through all your sorrows, through all your falls, through all your sin, through all of it all, through all your failings, through all the times you dishonor the Lord and all the times you're just walking backwards and floundering in this and that and discouraged and filled with despair, brethren, is there at the root of this whole thing an earnestness to have Christ above all else? That's the issue. Because I don't care how religious you are, I don't care how much you read your Bible, brethren, there are people that know the doctrines of grace, people that believe the deity of Christ, people that believe that Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross and rose three days later, ascended 40 days later - there are people that believe that to go to hell.

Brethren, the issue isn't that. Yes, those doctrines are critical to be believed, but the real issue is do you look at them and believe them with such passion, with such enthusiasm, that you're going to have that over everything else? That's the real issue, brethren. That's the heart of the matter. Is Christ the Treasure that is above and beyond all treasures? Is any sacrifice too great? What would you give in exchange for Christ?

You guys remember maybe Pilgrim's Progress - Pliable? You remember that guy? Falls into the slough of despond and goes back. When Christian gets to the narrow gate, he meets a man called "Good Will." Good Will says this. He asks him, "Do you come alone?" He says, well, no, I actually - he tells him I had Pliable with me for awhile, but we fell into the slough of despond and he turned back. Good Will says, "Alas, poor man, is the celestial glory of so little esteem with him that he counteth it not worth the running the hazard of a few difficulties to obtain it?" That's really the issue. Have you ever considered the parable of the soils? Why do some receive it gladly and when the sun comes out and these difficulties, trials, persecutions come, they fall away? Brethren, it's right here. They had never seen Christ to be the Treasure that He is. Because I guarantee you, in a little bit of difficulty, you don't turn back. You don't become Pliable and go back when this is the greatest Treasure of all. Brethren, you simply don't

do it. That man's a fool! He would not do it. And I'll tell you, who was it, (unintelligible) were just talking about a diamond mine down there in Peru. Brethren, look, if you know there's a diamond mine to be had there, but it's going to cause you some grief, it's going to cause you some difficulty, it's going to cause you some labor to get it, certainly, you don't just give up because you stub your toe on a rock.

Brethren, Bunyan hit it right on the head. What is it worth to you to have the Kingdom of Heaven? Brethren, think about what we have when we have the Kingdom of Heaven! We basically have this, right out of Ephesians 2, you have this idea: so that in the coming ages... Brethren, in the coming ages, God is going to show this immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Brethren, if you have the Kingdom of Heaven, and He says He gives this to us. Where is that? Like John 12? Luke 12? What is it worth to you to have God your God? I mean, we're talking the Almighty God here. The Almighty God - full of all wisdom, all power, all knowing - to have Him on your side; to have His will entirely bent for your good? Brethren, what is that? What is comparable to that? What is it comparable to have God on your side Who is not ashamed to call you His own, own you as one of His people, and His will bent on doing you good forever? Maximum good. All through Jesus Christ. Are you going to lightly esteem that? Are you going to turn back for something else? Brethren, this is the heart and soul. The real issue isn't how often you fall. The issue isn't how well you measure up. Obviously, look, all these things about what a Christian looks like and everything in the Word of God, they're all obviously applicable. You ought to be concerned with them. You ought to look at them. But brethren, the key issue is right here. What drives you? What motivates you?

And listen, if somebody ever comes along to you and says look, your problem is you're trying to feel saved. It's not feeling. It's just faith. It's simple faith. You just need to believe. Be away with the feeling. Brethren, I'll tell you what, that's not the Gospel of the Bible. Now look, you are justified by faith in Jesus Christ alone. But I'm telling you this, the faith that's described in this parable is not an emotionless, feelingless faith. It is one that is accompanied by joy. You see it right there. For joy he goes and he sells all that he has, so that he can buy that field and get that treasure.

Brethren, that's an issue right there. Look at your Christianity. Is basically the whole thing a woe-is-me kind of thing? Long face? Oh man, I've got to give that up? I've got to do that? I've got to do this other thing? Is that the way it is? It's just this duty-driven thing? Ugh, I can't believe this. I have to go to church again? I need to read my Bible again? Didn't I just do that three days ago? Brethren, I'm not saying everything in this Christian life is always easy. I'm not saying you're always full of the most ecstatic joy, but what I'm saying is that this is basically descriptive of true faith. Brethren, this is true faith. You know, demons believe. They're not saved. Faith without works obviously is dead. If you want to know the real issue between a true faith and that faith that isn't going to get a man to Heaven, it comes right to this. It comes right down to this parable.

Brethren, if you have a faith that is not accompanied by a joy that is willing to make sacrifice for Christ and to have Him at all expense, have Him over everything, if your faith is not accompanied by passion, that's what you find. Joy-driven passion. That's what you find in this parable. Brethren, if your faith is not that, if you have not found Christ to be so desirable and with joy and passion and drive to want to basically live your life for Him, if your faith doesn't take

you there, it is not a saving faith. Faith that truly sees Christ to be all these things is a faith that believes He is worth sacrificing and surrendering everything to have. I'm not saying that life won't be a battle and at times giving up certain idols is going to be some warfare and there's going to be possibly at times some chastening of our Father. He has promised to cleanse us from our idols. And sometimes they're deeply rooted. But brethren, in the end, this is basically a picture of the Kingdom of Heaven. If your life and your faith and your Christianity don't line up with this, when Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven is like this, and if you're not like that, then brethren, you're not in a good place. That is not a safe place to be. Bottom line, when you're trying to sort all this out, what it really comes down to is Christ. Christ. Christ. Do I see Him as a Treasure? Do I see Him that? Do I find in Him immeasurable riches of grace? I mean, bottom line, the Christian says when asked what are you going to compare to this? The Christian says: nothing. I can compare nothing to that. I can compare nothing to Christ. All else is dung.

Brethren, Kevin and I approached somebody at SAC on Tuesday. We sat down next to this guy and I asked him about Heaven. He just basically told me he doesn't think that anybody can know of a certainty whether they're going to Heaven or not. The Catholic church likes to set that forth as well. Assurance, they say, is an indication of pride. It's presumption. Only certain favored people have been able to know whether they're saved or not.

Brethren, the heart of it is this: Are you willing to follow Christ at all costs? Brethren, there's a calculation made. If anything, this parable is a parable of certainty, is it not? This is a parable of assurance. Assurance, certainty, confidence. No man goes and sells all that he has unless he's certain. Brethren, I'll tell you this, this parable not only explains Christians, this parable likewise explains the person that isn't a Christian - the non-Christian. The Christian joyfully suffers the loss of all things, joyfully endures, joyfully counts the stuff of this world as dung because he's convinced of something.

But likewise, brethren, likewise, the non-Christian is explained in all this as well. You see what happens with the non-Christian? He is not fully persuaded. Brethren, in our circles especially, he knows the doctrines of grace. He's wrestled. Maybe he agrees with them; maybe he doesn't. Wrestled with maybe the deity of Christ. Got some settled convictions on all those things. But brethren, the real defining and explaining factor in all this is that they always halt between two opinions. They're never fully inclined to throw in the whole thing on the side of the Lord. They're hesitant. Because you know what? The true Christian - Paul said he counted. Moses considered. There's an accounting. And when a man says: I'll have that. You remember, again, Pilgrim's Progress. There was a celestial city there. And the man said: Put my name down. There were all sorts of armed men standing between him and there. Put my name down. That's a man who wants the city. He takes up a sword and he goes and it says after giving and receiving many blows, he conquered them all and on in he went. That was an illustration given to Christian on his way. Brethren, that explains the Christian. When he sets his eyes on that celestial city, that celestial glory, and he says I'll have that no matter what it costs, it defines a man. He walks through life with definitive purpose. I'm going to Zion. And I'm going to get there. Christ - I'm going to have Him at all costs. And even when he's down on all fours and he can barely move forward and he's just beaten up and Satan's got him down, just like there with Apollyon, you remember what Christian said to him? I like His rule - Christ's. I prefer Him. I want Him. I like being under Him. I'm not quoting that exactly, but he said I'm pressing through you.

I'm going on. I'm going to have this. Brethren, bottom line, when the Christian is down there, and he can barely crawl, he can barely move, he's been beaten down, Satan's been upon him, he's discouraged, brethren, I'll tell you, even in the midst of that, this is what keeps a man going. Because even in the midst of all that he realizes, he comes to the reality, he hears the Word of God, it's momentary, it's light, and Christ is at the end of this thing, he's going to move on through.

But brethren, when you have somebody that's not fully persuaded that Christ is worth trading everything for, then what happens? He hesitates. He backs down. When something is needed, when something is required, when some sacrifice is appropriate, he hesitates. He's always balking. Why? Because he's not confident. It's more like the old poor me attitude. Look at how much I'm already doing kind of attitude. Look at what I've already done. He's always keeping a checklist of everything that he's already had to give up because it's been so difficult, because it's been such a trial, because it's been things he hasn't really wanted to give up. He keeps a stark record of it. Well, I've done this, and I've done this, and I've done this.

Whereas brethren, how often have the missionaries - have you ever read Adoniram Judson? He said at the end of his life: I have never made a sacrifice. Judson, you've never made a sacrifice? If you read his life, through bitter tears he laid two wives in their graves. He laid numerous children in holes in the ground. He was in a prison that's not like anything describable here in the West. And he gets to the end and he says... Hudson Taylor said the same thing, brethren. Amy Carmichael. She just rejoiced that going to India was a chance to die. You see, when a person is living their life and not even their own life is dear to them, they're not keeping a checklist. You know what you find there on judgment day? Lord, when did we do those things? Versus this person that's always hedging. They know exactly when they did everything. They keep a list. They check it twice. Why? Because there's no persuasion. They're always hesitating. They're always halting. The man who will not venture all for Christ and do it joyfully according to this parable is a man who's not fit for Heaven. I tell you this, men act the way they do because of what they're persuaded of. Mark it down. Brethren, what are you persuaded of?

I just ask you this in wrapping up here. Do you have a passion, a joy? Have you made such a calculation? Christ and all other things? And with joy been able to say Christ is worth more? It's not always easy what He's going to require of me because sometimes it's homes, it's family. You see those kind of things given up for the sake of Christ. Sometimes it's difficult. But brethren, the bottom line comes down to this, I know some of you, brethren, it's going to be part and parcel and par to the course, we are going to have Satan rush upon us. And according to 1 Thessalonians 5, some of us are going to be more feeble and weak than others. You're going to be more susceptible to Satan coming in and trying to convince you you're not saved, disturb your peace in that area. I recognize that's true. Brethren, I don't think it's appropriate to simply tell the whole church that when doubts come, that you just need to not concern yourself with it because it's not true. Some of you may very well be in our midst and you may be lost.

Bottom line, when it all comes back to this right down to here, here's the reality. Again, it seems like so many times, so many opportunities today. Pilgrim's Progress - you know he's in the Interpreter's house. And he sees a fire over against the wall. And he sees a man with a bucket of water throwing it on the fire, but every time the man throws the bucket of water on the

fire, the fire gets bigger. And so the Interpreter takes him around through a doorway to the other side of the wall, and the fire there in the fireplace is actually being quenched on one side, but there's another man on the other side of the wall throwing oil on the fire. Well, that man on the other side is Christ. That man over here is Satan. He's trying to put it out.

But I'll tell you this, that is a picture of Christianity. Because brethren, Christians fall into sin. They do. They fall into despair. They fall into sorrow. They fall into discouragement. Of course, they fall short. They fail. They mess up. They dishonor God. They stumble. They make fools of themselves at times. Brethren, I've been there, done that. You have too. We know these things. But here's the thing, in your inner being, do you come back to this persuasion over and over and over again? That Christ is all I need, all my hope, all my salvation, all my Treasure. Brethren, because here's the reality, no matter how much Satan may throw wet blankets on us, throw buckets of water on us, we have Christ over there with His buckets of oil throwing them on, bringing us back to this persuasion over and over and over. This is worth having. Brethren, this is a mark of the genuine work of the Spirit of God in the life of a sinner. Lay it down. This is the heart of the matter. When you have Christ above all. Are you going to go hard for Christ no matter what it costs you? Are you going to follow Christ if He takes your spouse? If He takes your children? Are you going to follow Christ if He takes your comfort? Are you going to follow Him if He takes your wealth? Are you going to follow Him if He takes your car, your house? Are you going to keep going if He takes your health? Are you going to keep going? Because in the end all these things that are thrown upon us and when Satan comes against us and all his whisperings and all that the world can throw and all the deprivations and everything, are you going to be just like Adoniram Judson at the end of the day and say when I look at Christ, just like the Apostle Paul, it was all nothing. It was less than nothing that I might have the surpassing worth of Christ. Can we say that, brethren? This is the mark of real Christianity. All other things - there are other things to be considered, but this is the heart of the matter. Is Christ the driving compulsion of your life and is there a certainty that He is more precious than everything else? Because brethren, those that hedge have not come to this persuasion. And if they haven't, they fall out of that parable. And Jesus says that the Kingdom of Heaven is like this, and if you're not like that, you should be afraid.

God help us, brethren. Brethren, I know that that is true in my heart. I know it is. I may not know a lot of things, but I know, brethren, when it gets hard, I keep coming back to this over and over and over again for 20 years. I am going to keep going. This is hard and there's a lot of days I want to throw in the towel, but I want Christ more than I want anything else.