

RELIGIOUSLY LOST

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There is more said in God's Word warning religious sinners who are lost than is said about those who are saved. It is amazing, as we study the Scriptures, to note God's warning to religious sinners. Take the Book of Hebrews. It was written with this intent-to warn religious sinners of their pending doom. The Apostle Paul sets forth two things in the Book of Hebrews: First, he tells the believer what he has in Christ; second, he warns religious sinners that they have missed Christ. I wish you would read the Book of Hebrews with those two thoughts in mind, because in every chapter the Apostle Paul warns religious sinners of their doom.

Just because a person is religious, it is no sign that he or she is saved. Satan has pulled this blindfold over the eyes of the average individual, and that is, that every individual who is religious is saved, but let me say with all the emphasis of my soul that, just because a person is a preacher, a Bible teacher, or an outstanding member of a given church, it is no evidence at all that such a person is saved. At a mission one night I met a woman and asked her the question, "Do you know Christ?" Her answer was, "Certainly, I do." The next night her husband was with her. I walked up to them and said to her, "I would be pleased to meet your husband." After being introduced to him, I asked, "Are you a Christian? Have you been born again?" She immediately snapped back at me with this statement, "I guess he is; he's a Baptist preacher!" My reply was, "My dear woman, that is no evidence that your husband is saved." Her statement was an indication that neither one was saved; both of them were lost and on the road to Hell, from that statement. They have not spoken to me since that day. The religious world cannot face the one question, "Do you know Christ?"

God's Word gives us vivid examples of characters who, though religious, did not know Christ, and were not saved. In order to lay a foundation for our present study, "Religiously Lost," I want to call your attention to three of them that stand out so plainly in the New Testament. The first is found in Acts 10:1,2, when a religious man was on the road to Hell. Listen to God's Word,

"There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms (gifts) to the people, and prayed to God always.."

Here we find a man who was devout and feared God, who also had a great spirit of giving and was a man of prayer. Yet he was religiously lost.

So many commentators have tried to explain this character without admitting that he was a lost sinner, and the reason for it is to save their own hide. But Cornelius was a lost religious sinner. For God to bring the Gospel to this individual, He sent to Cornelius an angel, who told him to send for the Apostle Peter. When the Apostle Peter was come into Cornelius' home, he preached the Gospel, and Cornelius was saved.

You know, angels can't preach the Gospel of Christ, because they have never sinned. They don't know anything about the Gospel. They don't know redemption in Christ. Now get this truth: No one but a born-again believer can preach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. That may sound strange, but it is so. They may preach the Word and not be saved, but they cannot preach the Gospel unless they are redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, and the reason for it is, they do not know the Gospel. How can you tell something you don't know? The Gospel is Christ, and unless you know Christ you can't preach Him!

Here we find a good man, from the standpoint of the world, who was going to Hell and didn't know it until he was warned. How many today in the pulpit and the pew are devout, yet religiously lost, and on the road to Hell and do not know it! Where do you stand? Do you know Christ? Do you know that you are saved? What are you basing your salvation on? Is it a decision? Is it on your faith? Is it resting on your repentance? your feeling? your emotions? Or, is it resting on your church membership? or turning over a new leaf? Or, is it based on some experience, or dream that you have had, or some vision that you have experienced? My friends, if it is, you are on sinking sand, and I don't care how religious you are, you are on the road to Hell. I would say, and be conservative, that 90% of our present-day religionists are lost and don't know it, and are on the broad road to destruction. I know of whole church congregations who are lost. If you don't believe it, just let a born-again preacher proclaim the Gospel under the power of God's Holy Spirit and see how rebellion rises up, and they will vote for him to leave town.

Now, let's look at another illustration of a religiously lost man found in Acts 18:24. Listen to God's Word,

"And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

Here we find a man who was eloquent, mighty in the Scriptures, fervent in the Spirit, and taught diligently, which means exactly, the things of the Lord; that is, he taught by word of mouth and by hearsay, the things that he had heard about the Lord. The reason he could teach only by hearsay was because he was lost and did not know Christ by revelation. He was teaching the things which he had learned intellectually, and Aquila and Priscilla, listening to him in the synagogue, detected the missing note in Apollos' preaching. They knew that he had missed Christ as his own personal Lord and Saviour. They knew he was not preaching Christ experimentally but only by hearsay. They invited him to go home with them, and there they sat down with him, and under the wisdom and leadership of the Holy Spirit they told Apollos how to be saved--no doubt, by telling him how God had saved them. The Scripture says, "They... expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly," and there he came to know Christ as his own personal Lord and Saviour. Then he became a mighty preacher of the Gospel and, instead of preaching "the things of the Lord," he preached Christ as Lord and Saviour. The average preacher that you hear today preaches only things about the Lord.

How many do we find in our pulpits today and in the Bible classroom who are teaching the Word of God fervently and earnestly, and the things about the Lord, but who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ experimentally! They have never come to see themselves by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, and they have never had Christ revealed to their hearts by the Holy Spirit through the Word. Many of them are teaching the truths of God's Word which they have learned from study and reading, or from hearing them. They have learned them intellectually, but they do not know them by revelation. You know, my friends, there is a head knowledge and there is a heart knowledge, but the path from the head to the heart is blocked by a solid rock--the human will. What they teach, they have learned intellectually; they are religiously lost. What a tragedy! Yet it is true all over the land, and I am, no doubt, preaching to many today who are in that awful condition--that is, religious, but lost!

Now, let me give you one other illustration, found in Rom. 10:1-3. Listen to God's Word:

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

Now, that's a marvelous Scripture with a great basic truth. Let me read it to you in the Amplified New Testament,

"Brethren, [with all] my heart's desire and good will for (Israel) I long and pray to God that they may be saved. I bear them witness that they have a [certain] zeal and enthusiasm for God, but it is not enlightened and according to [correct and vital] knowledge. For being ignorant of the righteousness that God ascribes (which makes one acceptable to Him in word, thought and deed), and seeking to establish a righteousness (a means of salvation) of their own, they did not obey or submit themselves to God's righteousness."

My friends, have you ever come to obey Christ? You hear folks talking about "obeying the Gospel"-but obeying the Gospel is obeying Christ, because Christ is the Gospel. These people that the Apostle Paul speaks of here were religiously wrong because of their ignorance. They were ignorant of God's righteousness. They were trying to be saved by their own self-righteousness. They represent a large group of religious people today. They are zealous but they are religiously lost. They do not know anything about the righteousness of God in Christ; that is, they do not know what imputed righteousness is.

So you see, my friend, that the greater part of the religious world today is lost because they do not know Christ. Will you face this one question: Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour? You could answer me, no doubt, like one fellow did when I asked him that question, "Brother Shelton, do you think that I am a heathen?" Now his concept of salvation was being brought up under religious influence. We had a preacher speak for us one Sunday night. After service someone casually said to him, "Tell me how God saved you." His testimony was that he joined the church when he was nine years of age and he had a fine Christian mother and Christian daddy, and that he knew he was saved because of his fine Christian parents. My friend, do you know Christ as your personal Substitute? Do you know Christ as your Sin-Bearer? Do

you know Christ as your Surety? Is He real to your heart as your Mediator? Can you say with the Psalmist, "The LORD is my shepherd"? Can you say with the Apostle Paul, "I know whom I have believed"? Are you willing for your testimony to be tested by the Word of God?

Religiously lost! What a tragical expression! May you be awakened to the fact that you are lost. There is no such thing taught in God's Word as being saved and not knowing it. You may be lost and not know it, but you can't be saved and not know it. I challenge every one of you, even the theological professor, every Bible student, to show me one verse in God's eternal Word from Genesis to Revelation that tells you that you can be saved and not know it. Brother, it is not there! In Gal. 1:11,12, we find these words,

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Salvation is a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ to the heart of a sinner. That is so in the heart of every individual who is saved, ever has been saved, or ever will be saved. Get this truth: If you are saved, Christ came to your heart as a direct revelation of Himself to you, and you alone, irrespective of anyone else. You were not taught it by man, neither were you led to Christ by any so-called soul winner. No man can lead any individual to Christ, because it is not in the power of any man to reveal Christ to the heart of that sinner; and no sinner can receive Christ as his Lord and Saviour until He is revealed to that individual's heart by the Holy Spirit. Now you drive a peg down there and hold that. It is only the Holy Spirit who showed you yourself; that is, who you are by nature, what you are by nature, and the judgment that you were under, and then it is the Holy Spirit who shows you Christ, who He is as your Substitute, your Surety, your Redeemer. Salvation can be summed up in this sentence: Salvation is knowing yourself, and knowing Christ.

Christ, when speaking to Peter one day, said to him,

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17).

This statement followed after Christ had asked His disciples who He was, and Peter spoke up and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Then the Lord Jesus stopped them in their tracks and pointed them to the one great eternal fact: "Peter, this knowledge came to you only through My Father, which is in Heaven." Now, let me make this statement to you: Not only do you know yourself by direct revelation of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, and not only do you know Christ as a direct revelation of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, but every truth of God's Word that you learn which becomes experimental to you, you learn it by direct revelation of the Holy Spirit through the Word. No man receives anything, except it be given him from Heaven, says the Word of God (John 3:27).

Now, let me ask you a very direct question, "Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ by hearsay only, or by revelation?" You have heard others talk about Christ; you have an intellectual concept of Him; you have given a mental assent to Him, and you can tell what you have heard,

or you can tell some little experience you have had, but has Christ ever been revealed to your heart, and do you know Him experimentally?

Now, preacher, let me ask you a question, Are you preaching what you have learned out of books in school, or are you preaching what God has revealed to your heart? Are you preaching things about Christ, or are you preaching Christ Himself? You cannot preach Christ unless you know Him. Now there is a vast difference between preaching about Christ, what you have learned about Him out of books, or even studying the Bible, and preaching Christ Himself, who has been definitely revealed to your heart by the Holy Spirit through the Word. It is the difference between life and death. It is the difference between Heaven and Hell. It is the difference between Christ and Satan. It is the difference between light and darkness. If you are preaching only what you have learned, or dug out of books by yourself, no matter how great a theologian you may be, you are not saved! Christ comes to the human heart only by revelation through the Holy Spirit by the Word of God. What a vast difference! Do you know Christ by revelation? Can you say, "He is mine, and I am His"? Or will you have to answer me like a certain preacher did one day, when I asked him the question, "Do you know Christ?" "Well, I'm trusting Jesus as my Saviour the best I know how." I would hate to go out into eternity on such a testimony--religiously lost!

Now, let's go just a step further. It is taught all over this country from the pulpit, in the classroom of Bible schools that some will know when and where they are saved, but the vast majority of our church people today cannot tell when and where they are saved, but they are saved. In other words, it is taken for granted that the vast majority of the religious population of our country are saved, regardless of the life they live or their relationship with their church. This is clearly demonstrated at every funeral that I have ever heard. Invariably the one who conducts the funeral will preach the individual into Heaven.

A five-year-old boy came out and joined the church one night, and the pastor asked him, "Are you trusting Jesus?" He said, "Yes." His grandmother who was sitting by his side said, "Pastor, I don't know whether John is saved or not." The pastor said, "Now, Grandmother, you let the boy alone. He may not know it, but he is saved." The grandmother said, "Pastor, I have not noticed any Holy Spirit conviction. He does not know what he is by nature; he does not know one thing about himself, and I am afraid he has come out and joined the church because others have. I am fearful that he does not know anything about the revelation of Christ to his heart as his Lord and Saviour. Pastor, won't you instruct him in the way of righteousness?" My dear listeners, we are facing one of the most awful hours that we have ever faced in Christendom; our churches are being filled with unconverted members, because there is scarcely any Holy Spirit conviction.

Now, let's face this question. If salvation is the greatest thing in a person's life--and it is--how is it that a person does not know when that takes place if he is saved? If salvation is the greatest thing--and it is--the Word of God says that you shall know (II Tim. 1:12; John 10:14), and, friends, you do know, if you are saved. If someone should give you a million dollars, would you ever forget it? Salvation and Christ cannot be compared to a million dollars, and yet you say you cannot tell when God saved you. Let me ask you another question, If you should have some type of disease and be cured of it, would you ever forget it? The reason the vast majority of our church folks today, when asked if they are saved, will say, "I think so," "I believe so," "I hope so," or "I joined the church when I was such and such an age," or "I was baptized by such and

such a preacher," or "I'm trusting Jesus as my Saviour," or some other such answer, is they are not saved. They cannot sit down and tell you how God saved them. If you have had a great experience, or if you've had a dream or a great vision, you can tell that. Why? Because it is real to you; it actually happened to you. But you cannot tell how God saved you, because it has never happened to you.

Therefore, you find there is nothing positive, concrete, definite or absolutely certain in the hearts and minds of the vast majority of our church folks regarding their salvation. A person said to me one day, "Well, I will listen to you over the radio if you won't be so positive and definite about your salvation." Now, why wouldn't she listen? Because it disturbed her. I had a missionary's daughter from Mexico get up and walk out of service one night when I made the statement that every individual whom God has ever saved knows that he is saved, and knows what he was saved from and what he is saved to. Now, why do you have to be so uncertain? It is because you have not gotten to Christ; you only know Him by hearsay, and not experimentally in your hearts. If you are married, you know that; if you are married to Christ, you will know that also.

Now, why is that the case? It is because the average professing Christian today has never come to see your disease of sin. You have never come to the knowledge of sin; you have never come to see yourself as an ungodly, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked, stripped, unclothed sinner, guilty before the Almighty God. Now that is the reason that to you salvation is a "think-so". You have never seen the disease; therefore, you do not know whether you are healed or not; you don't know whether your sins are forgiven or not. You don't know whether you are pardoned or not. You don't know whether you have found grace in the eyes of God or not. That is the reason salvation is not experimental to you.

For a sinner to know Christ experimentally, he has to be stripped and brought to see the leprosy of his sin, the corruption and vileness and wickedness of his old heart, and that there is no goodness within him. For you to say, "Oh, there's no goodness about me!" it doesn't mean a hill of beans. Has the Holy Spirit ever taken the Word of God as a two-edged sword and plunged it to the depths of your heart and laid it bare until you have seen the disease of your heart and you know it personally? Have you felt it, have you seen it, and do you know it, so that there is no doubt about it? You may say, "Oh, I'm such a beggar," but you are a proud old beggar, and you take pride in your begging. Then when you have seen your heart like that, the Holy Spirit must then apply the blood of the Son of God to your heart and wash you and you will be whiter than snow, and you will know it because you have felt your uncleanness, your vileness, and you know what it means to be cleansed by the blood of Christ. Brother, I do! I know the next day after God saved me, I said to someone, "Oh, I have never felt so clean in all my life," because I don't believe there ever lived a more guilty, vile, unclean wretch than I. And I know the continuing application of the blood of cleansing.

Let me close with this thought. Look at old Naaman the leper. When he came up out of the River Jordan after having dipped seven times, he looked at his hands and saw the leprosy was gone. Wouldn't you have liked to have heard him cry out, "Men, it's so! Men, it's so! Look what God's done! God's healed me." Yes, the old leprous sinner that has been stripped of all his brass and his pride and has gone down in the River Jordan, identifying himself with the Son of God on Calvary's cross and been cleansed by the blood of the Son of God will come back crying,

"Brother, it's so! God's done it! The disease is cured! You know, God has saved me! He's washed me, He's saved me, He's cleansed me! He's delivered me! He's broken the power of Satan.

Yes, I know it because I was so wild; I was so wicked, I was so unclean. I was so guilty, but now I am pardoned. I was so full of sin, but now I am forgiven. I was so stripped of all my self-righteous rags, but now I am clothed with the righteousness of the Son of God." Bless your heart, my friends, you will know it when God saves you. Amen.

RELIGIOUS-BUT LOST

The subject of our last message was, "Religiously Lost," but our subject today is, "Religious-But Lost." These studies grow out of many questions asked of leading church members, and the study of the spiritual and moral condition that has come under my observation. Facing individual church members with these questions, "Are you saved?" or "Have you been born again?" or "Do you know Christ?", I have received such answers as these:

"Well, I hope so. I think so. Well, I hope I am saved. You know, I have been a member of a church for so many years and have been faithful in my attendance." Or, "I have served in such and such capacities in my church." Will you let me be frank with you? Such answers betray the emptiness of human hearts and reveal a profession without possession, religion without life, and church membership without regeneration, because every saved person knows that he is saved and can tell when he was saved, where God saved him, what he was saved from, and what he was saved to. Now, you drive a peg down and hold that, my friends.

Then, on the other hand, when we observe the average church today as we look in upon her worship, her prayer meetings, her committee meetings, and her social groups, what do we find? There is one thing we do not find, and that is, whatever group you may observe, they are not taken up with Christ, and they are not talking about Him. Then, what are they doing? They are planning programs, they are talking about what they have accomplished, or they are talking about their social life, or they may be talking about their mission work. The whole thing can be summed up in this statement: They are doing, doing, doing, and this is the form of their religion. You walk up to the average church on a Sunday morning or Sunday evening, and visit with the different groups as they gather before services or in their Bible classes, they are not talking about Christ. You visit the average meeting of the officials of the church--the room as a rule is filled with tobacco smoke, and they are talking about the business of the church, but they are not talking about Christ. I'll go a step further, you meet the average group of preachers at a convention or pastor's conference, or any other meeting, and they will be talking about many things that go to make up the sum total of their lives socially, religiously, and from a business viewpoint, but they are not talking about Christ. And if you want to scatter them, you just start talking about Christ and praising the Lord Jesus Christ for His wonderful works of redemption, and they all have business somewhere else. I have not found this condition in just one section of our nation, but I have found it across the nation from coast to coast.

Then, when we look at the moral condition of the average church today, it is appalling to see the hypocrisy, the drunkenness, gambling, profanity, adultery, Sabbath-breaking that is practiced by a good percentage of our church folks, and even among the officials. As a result of all this, I have

been asked the question many times, "What percentage of church members are saved?" My answer usually is, "I do not know." I have ventured the opinion that if we have 5% of our church membership saved, that is a large percentage. My opinion is based upon religious census of the average denomination, which is stated thus:

5% of our church members do not exist

10% of present-day church membership cannot be found

20% never pray

25% of present-day church membership do not attend church services

30% never open their Bibles to read

40% never give to any cause that the church sponsors

50% never go to church on Sunday night

60% never give to missions of any type

75% never accept any responsibility in the church: they are just floaters

85% never go to prayer meetings

90% never practice family worship

95% of present-day church membership never witness to a soul about Christ.

My friends, these are not my figures, but these are the figures given by one of the leading denominations of this nation. So you see, if only 5% of our church membership witness about Christ, that is the only percentage of our church that could be saved, and no doubt among that number are many who do not know anything about the new birth experientially. It's an awful day in which we are living. Religious--but lost!

I want to raise some questions with you. First, is it possible for an individual to be religious and yet lost? Let's see what the Lord Jesus said about it in Matt. 7:21-23. Listen to God's Word,

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils (demons)? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Here Christ is talking about preachers, Bible teachers, and He states plainly that it is possible to be religious and yet lost, because He says, "Not everyone who is religious or names the name of

the Lord will be saved." Then He uses a very startling word in that twenty-second verse when He says, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord." The word "many," when used to refer to a class (as it is used here) means "the vast majority." So the Scripture could read like this, "Many (the vast majority) will say to me in that day." Yes, "The vast majority of preachers, Bible teachers, will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not preached in Thy name? have we not built wonderful churches? have we not had multitudes of professions?' but you will have to hear Me say, 'I never knew you. I've never met you in the new birth; I've never met you in repentance; I've never met you at the Mercy Seat. You never came pleading the blood for remission of sins. So depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity.' Isn't that an awful picture that our Lord gives us that the vast majority of our preachers and teachers in these closing days of the church age will be found without Christ in reality as their Lord and Saviour! So it's possible to be religious--but lost! How do you stand, my friend? How is it with you? Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you ever met Him in repentance? Have you ever met Him at the Mercy Seat, pleading nothing but the shed blood of the Son of God for the remission of your sins?"

Now, let's take another illustration from the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, and the first thirteen verses. Here we find the story of the Ten Virgins--the five wise and the five foolish. The five wise had oil in their lamps; the five foolish had the lamps but no oil. Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. There were five here, representing 50% who were religious--but lost. They had no oil in their lamps. It's an awful picture to think that such a percentage of the members of our churches have never been born again. They know nothing about Christ as their Lord and their Saviour experimentally. I have often been asked the questions, "Why such a condition?" "What has brought about this condition?" There are several reasons for it. First, our type of evangelism in the past generation has placed the emphasis on numbers instead of the salvation of the lost soul. The average evangelist and pastor has the idea that he did not have a meeting that was worth having if he didn't have a large number of professions.

The second reason for this condition is because of decision days in the Sunday Schools and other organizations of the church life in which great numbers of children have been brought into the churches who know nothing of regeneration. Holy Spirit conviction is foreign to them. The Bible says that all God's children are taught of the Lord. This great group coming into our churches are brought in on a decision; therefore, they have not been taught of the Lord. Only the Holy Spirit can take the things of Christ and show them unto the individual, and the average child is not given time for the Holy Spirit to teach him of the Lord; he is brought into the church on a decision and told he is saved, when he is not.

The third reason for this awful condition is that our pulpits are being filled with unsaved preachers from among this unsaved church membership, with the emphasis being put on the educational attainments instead of spiritual qualifications. It's almost impossible to be called to any type of church today unless you have a string of titles after your name based on educational or intellectual attainment.

Then the fourth reason that our churches are filled with unsaved individuals is that an unsaved preacher cannot tell a sinner how to be saved. He may preach the Word of God, but he can't tell a sinner how to be saved because he doesn't know Christ himself, and no individual can tell something he doesn't know. He may talk about Christ and tell an individual things about Christ,

but he can't preach Christ to the salvation of that sinner. I heard an evangelist not long ago bringing a message, and he told us about everything else except how to be saved, and the few statements he did make along that line were so confused and clouded until not one poor sinner listening to him learned how to be saved. That's due to the fact that the evangelist himself did not know Christ as his own Lord and Saviour in reality. Now, let me hold you to this one fact: You cannot tell something you don't know, and if you have never met the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you have never come to know Him, you cannot preach Him. My radio engineer is sitting yonder in the control room monitoring this message before it is sent out over the air. Now, if you would put me in that control room, I would not know what to do; therefore, the message would never go out: nobody would hear it. The same is true in the spiritual realm. My dear man, if you do not know Christ, you cannot tell someone else about Him. If you don't know Him, you don't know His love. You've got to take what someone else says about Him. If you don't know Christ, you don't know His wrath; you've got to take what someone else says about Him. If you don't know Christ, you don't know anything about His longsuffering, His mercy, His pardoning grace. You don't know anything about walking in fellowship with Him, and therefore you cannot tell anybody anything about Him except by hearsay, or what you have read about Him, or what you have heard others say about Him, which is secondhand information.

Then the fifth reason that our churches are filled with unsaved members is that the Holy Spirit is not known in the average pulpit and the pew today. They may talk about Him, but they don't know Him. You cannot know the Holy Spirit until you first know Christ. In this present hour many people are talking about the Holy Spirit who don't know Him as the Third Person of the Triune God. There is a young man now, whom I used to know when he was just a small boy, who is in demand all over the nation, speaking to groups in all types of churches on the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Poor, blinded, benighted man! he has had a great religious experience, and that is all he's talking about.

Now, this brings us to our next question I raise, "What is religion, and what about religious experiences?" We hear much about religion today, and that we are all going to Heaven, but by different routes. My friend, there is no such doctrine taught in God's Word. Religion is man's opinion, and there are new religions being born almost every day based upon man's opinion. Man's opinion is what he worships, as he knows nothing about the true God and the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour. There is a vast difference between religion and Christ. Christ is our life (Col. 3:4). Religion is your opinion. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:12). Religion or religious experiences is not life. Life is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me state frankly this great eternal fact: All religious experiences do not come from God. I do not care how sincere you are in your religious experience. I don't care how real it is to you. All religious experiences do not come from God! Satan works and moves in the realm of religion, and he moves upon the mind of the individual. His one purpose is to imitate true salvation in the form of a religious experience. Satan apes God in giving you religious experiences that he may get you to worship him. Now, you hold this fact: Satan can duplicate almost any type of religious experience except life. Satan works in the realm of the mind and never touches the spirit of man, but the sinner never knows that because his spirit is dead and hid in darkness, and is alienated from the life that is in God through Christ. These experiences are so real; Satan appears as an angel of light to you, and makes you believe that they come from God, and you will tell them as coming from God. If you would ever come to

know Christ experimentally, you would know what I'm talking about. Now, let me say something here, and you hold it: There is no type of religious experience before you are saved or after you are saved that will ever eclipse Christ in salvation, and when once God saves you in Christ, then you will talk about Christ. You will magnify the Lord Jesus Christ; you will exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, and all types of religious experiences will fall in the background, and the glories of Christ will overshadow everything else in the way of religion or religious experiences.

That being true, oh how Satan does rejoice in keeping poor sinners blinded to the salvation of their souls by such experiences and by keeping them active in church life just doing and doing and doing--and make them satisfied with it, and make them glory in it! And you get angry with me for even questioning these religious experiences as being of Satan.

Now, what is Satan's main purpose behind all this? It is to keep you from being awakened to the fact of your lost condition that you might turn to Christ for salvation. As kindly and as tenderly as I know how, I urge every one of you listeners to examine yourself and make sure of your salvation, because many of you who claim to be saved and base your salvation on some religious experience, or activity in church life, are lost. You are religious--but lost! Every lost church member is living under the wrath of God, and if you pass into eternity in that condition, you will wake up in Hell. My friend, I know what I'm talking about. I was there one day. I averaged praying from five to seven hours a day in that religious condition. There isn't a religious experience that any of you folks in radio land have ever had that I can't trump with that same type of religious experience before God saved me. And they were all of Satan! It's just one chance out of a billion, I would say, that God ever pulled me out of such a religious life and saved me in Christ. Day after day I marvel, I am amazed, and I never cease to praise and thank God for pulling me out and saving me. I know anything this side of Hell is mercy.

The third question I want to raise is, "Why is it so hard for an unsaved church member, or a person who is religiously lost, to be saved?" Almost every preacher who is listening to me at this moment will admit in his heart that there are members in his church who may not be saved. All right, that being so, let me ask you a question: My brother pastor, how long has it been since some lost church member has been awakened to his lost condition under your preaching, and he has come to you and said, "Pastor, I realize I am lost"? Your answer will probably be, "It has been a long time," if such has ever happened under your preaching. All right, my brother, you have given the first answer to the above question, and it is this: The average preaching today is not designed to awaken, and it does not awaken the religiously lost to their awful, ruined condition out of Christ. Now, why is that so? It is because there is no Holy Spirit conviction in your preaching. The average church member can sit under the average message today and never be stirred, never be made to think about his awful condition out of Christ, and get up and go home, never knowing what manner of man he is. Then he can go on about his work on Monday, living the same life with no thought of whether he is saved or lost, because he has never been brought face to face with the one question, "Am I saved? Do I know Christ?" I want to tell you we are living in an awful day. There is no offense in the average preaching. The "offense of the cross" is done away with, and the average preacher is taught today not to make anybody mad, not to offend anyone, but he is taught how to get along with folks, draw his breath and draw his salary and let his congregation go to Hell.

Then another reason why it is so hard for unsaved religionists in our churches to be saved is that they are deceived and have the wrong concept of salvation, for they believe that they are saved by doing. They'll tell you, "I'm living the best I can, and I believe when I die, the Lord will overlook all my mistakes and take me on to Heaven." What an awful state that Satan has a poor, lost soul in! Man by nature is deceived. Satan has him deceived, and he does not want that individual awakened to the fact that he is deceived. It is only the power of God that can awaken that individual to his state of deception. The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Triune God, must take the Word of God and lay bare that soul, and make it alive, opening his understanding, which is darkened, opening his blinded eyes to see and his darkened heart to believe.

Then another reason it is so hard for a lost church member to be saved is that many think they know so much about the Word of God and their knowledge puffs them up, and being deceived, they cannot be shown the way of salvation. Being in that state of deception, they are self-satisfied, and like a man freezing to death, they want to be let alone. They do not want to be disturbed from their self-satisfaction. Their cry is, "Let me alone! Go on and let me alone. I have my religion; I'm satisfied. Just let me alone!" The only thing God has to do for you to go to Hell is just let you alone. I never let my people alone. I don't care how much the world or the church criticizes me: I never take anything for granted from a single member of my church, or anyone that I have an opportunity to deal with, or that God has made me overseer of as their bishop or their shepherd.

Now, why? You are sleeping the sleep of death and don't know it. May the Holy Spirit at this moment strike terror to your heart and awaken you to the fact of your lost, ruined, undone condition and turn you in search of Christ as the Lord and Saviour of your soul. You are in an awful shape. May the God of all grace have mercy on you and call you forth from the dunghill of the world and let you see your lost condition.

Then there is another reason why it is so hard to reach the unsaved in our churches and bring them to Christ as their Lord and Saviour: They are afraid of what others may think about them or say about them. Dr. Wilson tells this story in one of his books; he said: "One night while preaching to a large audience on the new birth, I noticed that an elderly lady sitting under the balcony wept during most of the service. When the service closed, the audience was dismissed, and I made my way to where she was, and after introducing myself to her, asked her if there were any way I could help her in her troubled condition. Then she told me this startling story: 'Brother Wilson, I'm a preacher's wife. My husband is an active pastor, and has been for years. I joined the church when a young girl, married when I was young, and for these many years I have lived with the consciousness that I was lost, and have never been saved, but was afraid of what folks might think about me, being a preacher's wife. But I have stood it as long as I can. No matter what folks may say, I want to be saved.' " My friend, is that your trouble? Are you afraid of what someone might say or think? The fear of man is a snare.

I know of a leading pastor in a certain city within the range of this broadcast who told his wife, "If you come out and admit you are lost, I'm quitting you." I find that the average pastor does not want the members of his family or the members of his church disturbed. When a church member is awakened to that fact, most of the time he is ostracized from the church because he is so

discouraged by some religious leader or the pastor; and if he ever gets saved, it will be in spite of the church and the pastor.

Let me ask you this question in closing: What is the difference in a person being lost in the church or out of the church? A lost sinner is a lost sinner, no matter where he is and who he is. Salvation is one thing, and one thing only--Christ. A lost church member has as much right to be saved as a lost member out of the church. I preached twenty-five years before God saved me, and I never cease to praise Him that He saved me. I never cease to praise Him that He brought me over all the criticism, every discouragement, and brought me to Christ. Amen!

"Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end?" (II Sam. 2:26).

If, O my reader! thou art merely a professor, and not a possessor of the faith that is in Christ Jesus, the following lines are a true sketch of thine end.

You are a respectable attendant at a place of worship; you go because others go, not because your heart is right with God. This is your beginning. I will suppose that for the next twenty or thirty years you will be spared to go on as you do now, professing religion by an outward attendance upon the means of grace, but having no heart in the matter. Tread softly, for I must show you the deathbed of such a one as yourself. Let us gaze upon him gently. A clammy sweat is on his brow, and he wakes up Crying, "O God, it is hard to die. Did you send for my minister?" "Yes, he is coming." The minister comes. "Sir, I fear that I am dying!" "Have you any hope?" "I cannot say that I have. I fear to stand before my God; Oh! pray for me." The prayer is offered for him with sincere earnestness, and the way of salvation is for the ten-thousandth time put before him; but before he has grasped the rope, I see him sink. I may put my finger upon those cold eyelids, for they will never see anything here again. But where is the man, and where are the man's true eyes? It is written, "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." Ah! why did he not lift up his eyes before? Because he was so accustomed to hear the gospel that his soul slept under it. Alas! if you should lift up your eyes there, how bitter will be your wailings. Let the Saviour's own words reveal the woe: "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." There is a frightful meaning in those words. May you never have to spell it out by the red light of Jehovah's wrath! - C.H.S.

"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds" (Prov. 27:23).

Every wise merchant will occasionally bold a stock-taking, when he will cast up his accounts, examine what he has on hand, and ascertain decisively whether his trade is prosperous or declining. Every man who is wise in the kingdom of heaven, will cry, "Search me, O God, and try me;" and he will frequently set apart special seasons for self-examination, to discover whether things are right between God and his soul. The God whom we worship is a great heart-searcher; and of old His servants knew Him as "the Lord which searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men." Let me stir you up in His name to make diligent search and solemn trial of your state, lest you come short of the promised rest. That which every wise man does, that which God Himself does with us all, I exhort you to do with yourself this evening. Let the oldest saint look well to the fundamentals of his piety, for gray heads may cover black hearts:

and let not the young professor despise the word of warning, for the greenness of youth may be joined to the rottenness of hypocrisy. Every now and then a cedar falls into our midst. The enemy still continues to sow tares among the wheat. It is not my aim to introduce doubts and fears into your mind; nay, verily, but I shall hope the rather that the rough wind of self-examination may help to drive them away. It is not security, but carnal security, which we would kill; not confidence, but fleshly confidence, which we would overthrow; not peace, but false peace, which we would destroy. By the precious blood of Christ, which was not shed to make you a hypocrite, but that sincere souls might show forth His praise, I beseech you, search and look, lest at the last it be said of you, "Mene, Mene, Tekel: thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." -C.H.S.