

John MacArthur gives a very good illustration of what it means to hear the gospel message and then reject it. Listen to his comments:

“They could not return because they had crucified to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame. To themselves (Hebrews 6:6) simply means that, as far as they were concerned, the Son of God deserved to be crucified. Regardless of what they may still have been professing openly and publicly, they now took their stand with the crucifiers. In their hearts they said, *“That’s the same verdict we give.”* They had made trial of Jesus Christ and, with all the evidence possible, they decided He was not the true Messiah. They had turned around and gone back to Judaism. To them Jesus was an impostor and deceiver and got exactly what was coming to Him. They agreed with those who killed Jesus, and they put Him to an open shame again. Shame here connotes **guilt**. They declared openly that Jesus was guilty as charged.

“When anyone has heard the gospel and then turns away, he has done exactly what these Jews did. Though he would never take up a hammer and spikes and physically nail Jesus to a cross, **he nevertheless agrees to Jesus’ crucifixion**. He takes his place with the crucifiers. If this happens with full light, such a person has become an apostate, and for him salvation is forever out of reach. He has rejected Jesus Christ against the full light and power of the gospel. He is incurably anti-God, and for him is reserved the hottest hell. He takes his place with Judas, who walked and talked and ate and fellowshiped with God incarnate¹, yet finally rejected Him. *‘How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?’* (Hebrews 10:29).

“It is dangerously self-deceptive for a person to think that, by staying on the sidelines, by holding off deciding, by thinking himself tolerant of the gospel simply because he does not outwardly oppose it, that he is safe. The longer one stays on the edge the more he leans toward the old life. **Staying there too long inevitably results in falling away from the gospel forever**. It may not be, and often is not, a conscious decision against Christ. But it is a decision and it is against Christ. When a person

¹ Literally, "in flesh"; theologically, the doctrine that in Jesus of Nazareth God took on human flesh and became the God-man.

Walter A. Elwell and Philip W. Comfort, “INCARNATION,” in *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), *WORDsearch* CROSS e-book, 631.

goes away from Him in full light, he places Him on the cross again, in his own heart, and puts himself forever out of the Lord's reach.

“How terribly serious it is to reject Jesus Christ.

“For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. (Hebrews 6:7-8).

“Do you see the illustration? All those who hear the gospel are like the earth.

- “The rain falls, the gospel message is heard.
- The gospel seed is planted and there is nourishment and growth.
- Some of the growth is beautiful and good and productive. It is that which is planted, rooted, and nourished in God. But some of the growth is false and unproductive. It has come from the same seed and has been nourished by the same ground and the same water, but has become thorny, destructive, and worthless. It has rejected the life offered it and become good only for burning.”²

Later in 2 Timothy, Paul describes such false Christians.

2 Timothy 3:1-5:

¹ But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.
² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,
³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,
⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,
⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

This is the condition of our culture in this present day.

In his letter to Titus, Paul says this about that kind of people.

They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed. (Titus 1:16)

2 TIMOTHY 2:13:

² Ibid. Emphases added.

If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

The unsaved will at some time deny Christ because they never had a saving faith in Him to begin with. Nevertheless, **Jesus remains faithful**, not only to those who believe in Him but also to those who do not.

John 3:16-18:

*¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.***

*¹⁷ "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but **that the world might be saved** through Him.*

¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Christ will never break His promise to save those who trust Him, nor will He break His promise to condemn to Hell those who do not. To do otherwise would be to deny Himself (see 2 Timothy 2:13 above), which is not possible, for God's holy and perfect nature will not allow Him to do that.

God's promises are sure and over history have always been kept.

1 Kings 8:56:

"Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant."

Ezekiel 12:25:

"For I the LORD will speak, and whatever word I speak will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, for in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it," declares the Lord GOD."

You can take it to the bank that God will do what He says He will do.

Because of this faithful nature which is found both in Christ and in God, Paul wrote:

That is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return. (2 Timothy 1:12 NLT)

This is what we find in Hebrews as well, which Paul may have also written:

Hebrews 10:23:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

“In 1979 Verna Bowman of Telford, Pennsylvania, gave birth to her fourth child, Geoff, and quickly learned from doctors the frightening news: the baby had defective kidneys. Writing in *Guideposts*, she tells that doctors ordered the child rushed to a children's hospital in Philadelphia, where he would receive kidney dialysis.

“Still hospitalized herself, Verna prayed and prayed for her son, and as she did she soon felt God's nearness. Unbidden, the words of a Scripture text began to repeat in her heart: **"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God"** (John 11:4). **She wrote the words down.**³

“Later her husband called to report on the baby's condition: "It's too soon to tell if he's going to make it," he said.

"He's going to make it," Verna replied, and she read him the verse that God had breathed into her heart. "I believe those words," she said.

“So do I, Verna,” replied her husband. “So do I.”

“After three months of dialysis, Geoff's kidneys, though still defective, began to function on their own. Throughout his childhood Geoff took medication and tired easily. During that time Verna collected in her journal other Scriptures which encouraged her faith that her son would be all right.

“When Geoff was thirteen, the doctors reported he would need a kidney transplant. Though unsettling at first, this news turned out to be the answer to her prayers. Verna herself provided the kidney, and the operation was a complete success. Geoff would be able to live a normal life.

“Later Verna's daughter suggested they do something special with the Scriptures that had meant much to them during Geoff's long sickness. Verna often made quilts and her daughter was skilled at cross-stitch, so they decided to make a quilt that displayed twelve of the cherished promises from the Bible. Each Scripture was stitched onto white linen and bordered in a pattern of hunter green and burgundy. Three months later the quilt was completed and hung on the wall of their guest room. When others admired the quilt, it eventually was hung in their church as well as other churches in the area.

“God's promises had made a great difference for Verna Bowman. When she chose to have these promises stitched onto a quilt, she made a fitting

³ Emphasis added.

choice. As comforting as a quilt on a cold wintry night, so God's promises ward off soul-chilling fear. They warm the soul.”⁴

If you have never done so, please commit yourself to Jesus before it is too late. Then you too will be able to experience this kind of comfort, both in this life and then forever in eternity.

Be a Good Worker
2 Timothy 2:14-19

This has been a long chapter so let us take a moment to reread 2 TIMOTHY 2:1-13 (NLT):

¹ Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus.

² You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.

³ Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

⁴ Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them.

⁵ And athletes cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules.

⁶ And hardworking farmers should be the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor.

⁷ Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things.

⁸ Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach.

⁹ And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained.

¹⁰ So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.

¹¹ This is a trustworthy saying: If we die with him, we will also live with him.

¹² If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us.

¹³ If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.

Now we will continue reading from verse 14:

2 Timothy 2:14-19 (NLT):

¹⁴ Remind everyone about these things, and command them in God's presence to **stop fighting over words**. Such arguments are useless, and they can ruin those who hear them.

¹⁵ Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. **Be a good worker**, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.

¹⁶ **Avoid worthless, foolish talk** that only leads to more godless behavior.

¹⁷ This kind of talk spreads like cancer, as in the case of **Hymenaeus and**

⁴ Op cit., Larson, 428-429.

Philetus.

¹⁸ *They have left the path of truth, claiming that the resurrection of the dead has already occurred; in this way, they have turned some people away from the faith.*

¹⁹ *But God's truth stands firm like a foundation stone with this inscription: "The LORD knows those who are his," and "All who belong to the LORD must turn away from evil."*

"The young preacher thrilled his congregation with his first sermon—a challenge to "gird their loins" for Christian service and living. Then, to their dismay, he preached the same sermon the following Sunday. When he confronted them with the same ringing message on the third Sunday, his flock felt something must be done.

"Don't you have more than just one sermon?" blurted a spokesman to the pastor.

"'Oh, yes,' he said quietly, 'I have quite a number. But **you haven't done anything about the first one yet!**'"⁵

We particularly like this story about D.L. Moody:

"In 1897 Dr. Grenfell was in Boston. Mr. Moody was holding meetings in Tremont Temple at the time. Dr. Grenfell sought him out at his hotel—the first time they had ever met—and told Mr. Moody he owed his conversion to him 14 years before. 'What have you been doing since?' was Mr. Moody's immediate question."⁶

Mr. Moody knew how to get to the core of things without taking any detours. His question to Grenfell is one we should be asking ourselves and others. So we are going to put it to you right now. You say you are a Christian and have been one since you were old enough to remember. We are glad to hear that, but **what have you been doing since?** Have you made yourself available to work for God whenever He sends work your way? Are you prepared to work for God 24/7? Do you feel you always respond obediently when God calls upon you to do something? Well, if you are anything like us, you know you do not. It is time to stop just sitting on the pier thinking about the trip; it is time to get in the boat and start rowing.

⁵ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

⁶ Ibid.