

Message #43 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

"What Kind of Talk Are You?"

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Once again I would like to thank those of you who have sent in requests for CDs and transcripts, and those who have asked questions or given us some things to think about. I appreciate hearing from you. We like questions, so please feel free to ask them.

Today I'd like to talk about your heart. In a recent program I shared my heart for the things that are most important to me concerning the church and the soon return of Jesus Christ. But I was wondering what most people who listen to the program feel about these things. When I talk to different people, I'm always most concerned about how they feel about God, and how important they think Jesus is to their daily lives. It seems that many people that I talk to have a desire for goodness and for church, and for going to heaven, but it is only a few that I talk to that seem to be fervently occupied with Jesus Christ and his soon coming. A long time ago I heard someone say that religion was good, but that a person shouldn't carry it around on their sleeve. But I could never understand this. To me, when I became a Christian, I felt that there wasn't anything else left in the world to be interested in. Of course, like everyone else I struggled with the desires of this world, but over the years I have been increasingly unable to carry on friendly conversations that don't centrally focus on God and on his work in this earth.

I have heard the phrase, "You shouldn't be so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good." I used to wonder if I was so heavenly minded that I was ineffective at reaching people with the gospel. But I've come to the conclusion that we can't be too heavenly minded. But rather, we should be extremely heavenly minded so that we can accomplish some earthly good. It seems to

me that the more you concentrate on Jesus Christ, then the more you will think about doing the will of God, and this will increase the likelihood that you will be led by God's Holy Spirit.

So, what about you? Do you ever think about God so much that you don't seem to fit in with those around you? Do you ever find yourself at a family reunion or wedding, etc. where you feel like a third party because no one talks the same language you do? Do you ever listen to the conversation of others and wonder how they can think their conversation is so interesting when all they do is talk about their house, their car, their hobbies and their financial problems? I've been in situations where I was so disappointed with the conversation being so shallow that I could not find anything to say, nor did I want to say anything. Sometimes I've felt like just a bump on a log, with nothing to contribute to the subjects being discussed, and sometimes I think that's how the other people saw me too, just a bump on a log.

As I've contemplated this, I've wondered if there was something wrong with me, but I remember what Jesus said about the tares growing up with the wheat, and also that when he comes he will separate the sheep from the goats. In Matthew 25, we read that the tares will be put into a pile to be burned, and the goats will be put on his left to be cursed and sent to everlasting fire. I'm not suggesting that all Christians who don't talk about God all the time, are goats, or tares, but I really enjoy talking to people whose central focus is God, and it doesn't take much insight to realize that those who keep their center of attention on God all the time are probably not goats or tares. If you happen to fall into the category of those people who are not extremely occupied with Jesus all the time, maybe you should take a good long look at things and make sure you really do have the assurance of eternal life with Christ. In fact, if you don't have God on your mind all the time on this earth, what makes you think you will enjoy heaven where there isn't anything else but God? If God bores you after an hour or so of church, what will you do in heaven where there's no T.V.?

There is a difference between the hearts of sheep and hearts of goats. However, both sheep and goats are part of God's flock. Have you ever wondered why the goats would be sent to eternal fire and torment, yet they were part of God's flock? Have you ever wondered why the goats were included as acceptable sacrifices during the temple days of the Old Testament? A young male goat lamb was acceptable as a Passover lamb just as much as a sheep lamb was acceptable. Sometimes, when you think about it, you think that there isn't any real difference between sheep and goats, but yet the Bible tells us that goats are unacceptable at the time when Jesus comes back to the earth to redeem us. However, according to Matthew 25:34, the sheep are set on the right hand of Jesus and then are welcomed into the kingdom of Heaven. It's interesting to read the next few verses and see that the reason the sheep are welcomed into the kingdom is because they were the people of God who were concerned for others. They loved the family of God, and they ministered to the others according to their need. They gave of themselves. Then we read in the next few verses that the goats did not minister to the needs of others, and therefore Jesus was not ministered to. The goats were not concerned for others, but for themselves.

This selfishness is apparent in the goats, and the self-sacrificing attitude is apparent in the sheep. But what makes the difference of whether you turn out to be a sheep or a goat? What makes the determination of whether you will be unselfishly minded or selfishly minded? Of course, we quite well know the answer to that one. The person who is unselfish has a heart after God. They love, like God loves. Their heart is tender, not hard. They can be touched with the feelings of the hurt of others.

Now, it's interesting to realize that people come to accept Jesus Christ as Savior in different ways. Sometimes people hear the initial gospel, and immediately believe it. I was thinking about this the other day. One person may hear the gospel, and wonder about it, and will need to read about it and study it, and hear the word preached many many times before they accept it for themselves and truly believe it. Others may only hear it once and will accept Jesus Christ as truly being the Son of God that very moment. In the world's eye view, these people would be called gullible, because they believed so easily. The world tells us not to trust anyone, and to make absolutely certain that something is safe before trusting in it. And because there is so much evil in the world, this is probably a good thing, as far as worldly things are concerned. But when you believe the gospel immediately without ever checking it out according to scripture over a long period of time, why is this still a good thing instead of being considered being gullible?

We look at gullible people as being stupid. People who will believe anything at the drop of a hat are not usually considered to be very smart. But yet, we have ample evidence in the scriptures that these same people are not gullible, they're not stupid, but they are actually more acceptable in God's eyes than those who question everything. The whole concept of Christianity is based on the concept of faith. Faith is believing in something to the point that you trust in it. God gave promises to Abraham and Abraham believed God's promises, and it was accounted to Abraham as righteousness, just because he believed.

The world is full of people who believe. No, I'm not talking about believing in Jesus Christ. Sure, there are many Christians who believe in Jesus, but I'm talking about people who believe other things. There are actually thousands of different religions in the world, and every person who is a follower of any religion, Christian or otherwise, believes something, otherwise they wouldn't be followers of that religion's doctrine. Some people believe in ghosts. Some people believe in the tooth fairy. Some people believe in Santa Claus, and some people believe in Buddha. But there is something special about someone who believes in Jesus Christ, and believes in him without understanding all the scriptures. Why are these people special? Of course, the answer, once again, is that you have a heart that is after God.

It's an amazing thing to have a heart after God. To have a heart that is moved by the things of God, moved by the word of God, is not something that comes to all people. Some people will enter the Kingdom of Heaven by going through what is described in scripture as a narrow gate. Others will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and they are described as going in the broad way which leads to destruction. But in order to go through the narrow gate, a person must first believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God, for Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is

God, who has come to earth in the form of a human in order that men might see God for what he really is, and then accept him as the one and only true God. Jesus said that if the people truly knew the Father, then they would also recognize him as being God. In John 14:9, Jesus explains to Philip, one of his twelve disciples, that he was God. He said to Philip, "Have I been such a long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip. He that has seen me, has seen the Father." So when we hear the gospel, the good news, of Jesus Christ, those of us who have a heart after God recognize God in Jesus, and accept him. It's an extraordinarily simple thing. We just hear about Jesus Christ, who he is, and what he represents, and we believe. No, we're not gullible. We don't run around believing every Tom, Dick, and Harry that comes along with a nice story.

What we have is a heart that can be moved by the Holy Spirit of God, and when we hear the word of God, we are moved by the word of God. We are touched by it. We hear it and we love it. We accept the word of God because it sets right with us. No, very few of us can explain all the scriptures like the apostle Paul could do, but nevertheless we recognize God in the words of Jesus, and we recognize God when there is a true move of the Holy Spirit.

But what about those people who don't accept Jesus Christ because they can't recognize God when they are told the Gospel? What's inside of them that inhibits them from believing? What is holding them back? The answer, once again, is simple. They don't have a heart after God. They don't like the things that God talks about when he speaks. They aren't moved by the Holy Spirit of God, but rather are moved by other spirits which do not demonstrate God. Sure, they may once have received the knowledge of who God is, and may even have received the good news joyfully, but then something happens to their faith. After awhile they begin to cool toward the gospel. After awhile they don't seem to think the gospel is all that great as they first thought. Other things of the world become more important to them, and sooner or later they stop seeking more of God and begin to seek more of the world.

This is what happens to people who's hearts are not as open to God as they claim to be. These people's hearts are hardened, so that the truth of God cannot enter in to their hearts and cause their lives to change into lives of righteousness. Yes, their hearts are soft enough to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and even to believe that salvation is through Jesus Christ, but their hearts are not completely in accord with the heart of God, for as soon as God begins to lead them too far away from the things of this world that they love, they forsake him. You see, it isn't that their hearts are totally hard, but their hearts just haven't quite become as open to God as they should be. Their hearts still have that hard covering that keeps all but the initial truth from coming in. Many people can feel the moving of God's Holy Spirit at first. But then, when God's Spirit begins to lead them into lives of self-sacrifice, they rebel. There are lots of people in the church, or who have attended church for awhile, that can receive an easy gospel, and can receive the concept of Jesus Christ as Savior, but cannot receive the concept of a God who wants his will to be followed instead of the person's own will.

These people usually claim to be Christians, and some of them even continue to go to church. But they are goats, and not sheep. They are goats, because they don't want all of the word of God, but only the word of God that gives them something without having to give something back. These are the people that like to talk about everything, but mostly like to talk about things that stimulate the flesh part of man, and don't like to talk all that much about the things that stimulate the new spirit man who was born again. It's really not too hard to distinguish between sheep and goats. In Matthew 7:16, Jesus tells us that we can recognize who is a true Christian and who is not a true Christian by the fruit they bear. This is equated to a tree which when planted, bears fruit for the sake of eating. A person who is planted in Jesus Christ must bear fruit. In other words, they must produce a positive result of the gospel that was planted in them. When you have the word of God sown in you, it should bring about a reproduction which brings life to others. If it doesn't, then you are like a tree that has lots of leaves, but doesn't do much for people who are looking for something to eat.

Goats are plentiful in churches. Goats in church are the people who don't have much interest in the things of God except when it is time to go to church. Then they look around for a church that blesses them as much as possible from week to week. You can recognize these people many times by listening to see which one changes the subject from spiritual themes to secular themes most often.

Sure, you know what I mean. These people will talk about Jesus, but when they contribute to the conversation, most of the time they will turn the conversation away from Christ and toward secular subjects. Actually, if you're listening to me right now, why don't you take a look at yourself and see which type of person you are. All you have to do is think about what your own responses generally are when it comes to conversation.

But you know, Matthew 7:21 tells us that not everyone who says they are followers of Jesus Christ are going to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And in verse 22, it tells us that these same people include those who appear to be quite the great Christian on the outside, but that God still rejects them because he never really knew them. To know someone is to recognize who they really are. If you're a true Christian, you will recognize who God truly is. When you truly do this, you will recognize that God is love, and that Jesus is God because he is the Word of God, and that a true moving of the Holy Spirit is a true moving of God himself. Of course, you will also receive this word of God, and you will also be moved by this Holy Spirit, for your heart will be so much in accord with the heart of God that nothing that comes from him will be rejected. People who love God and love the word of God, love to follow God, even though it is at the cost of giving up their old nature.

These are the kind of people I like to talk with, the ones who love God so much that they don't want to talk about anything else. These are the people that give me the greatest joy in conversation and fellowship. No, not every moment we spend on earth is going to be in talking to other like-minded Christians, for if we really love God, and want desperately to follow him, then we will be self-sacrificial and will not always be looking to satisfy our own desires. But

when we do converse with other Christians who are in fellowship with us, I like Christians who can't get enough of God. I like Christians who can't talk much about earthly things because they are so fervently focused on Jesus Christ and the life he has called us to lead.

How about you? Do you ever feel this way too? Do you have this same feeling when you're around others, that you just want to talk about the Lord? Do you ever find yourself at a public or family gathering, or even maybe in church, and feel like you just want to run away to your cave so you can escape the shallow conversation, because nobody wants to talk about Jesus?

You know, I'm pretty fortunate in that God has blessed me in the church I now attend. I can find others there who want to talk about the Lord as much as I do. But I have been in other churches where this wasn't so. During those times the Lord had me doing what he wanted to do and not what I wanted to do. There are times when you have to be where God wants you, which might not be a place that is so spiritual. But then, if it was always a great spiritual time of fellowship, then you won't be used very much. I once attend a new church for a short time, and then one day I decided I didn't want to attend there anymore because the church was not what I wanted. I was standing in church at the time, and I mentally said to myself, "I guess I'll go somewhere else. This place has got too many problems." At that same instance God spoke to me and said, "So, Randy. What are you going to do? Find another church that is just right for you? If you do, I don't need you there." This was a real blow to me. Here I was trying to think about myself, and the Lord was showing me that most of the places he sends us are not all that much fun. In fact, think about the missionaries who have been sent to places where the people would practice cannibalism. I don't think that would be just the place that would really make them feel good. But because they wanted to follow the will of God so much, rather than to follow their own desires, God was able to put them into a place that ministered to the spiritual and physical needs of people.

I don't know if you have heard my description of sheep and goats before, but there is something interesting about their natures. Sheep graze. They eat grass. They go steadily forward and eat what is put before them. But the goats don't graze, as such. They browse. They prance about and nibble first on one thing and then another and then prance somewhere else and nibble on that. And they don't like to eat lush green grass as much as they like to eat weeds. These two animals are like Christians. The sheep represent Christians who stay in the word of God and go steadily forward, consuming it in a dedicated manner. But the goats are like Christians who don't like to methodically devour the word of God, but like to jump around in it and take a little here and a little there, and never quite get all the good stuff they need. And they especially like that which is not the lush good word, but rather tend to look for the things that are more like weeds. They don't want the quality of the word of God, but that which suits their own fancy for the moment.

No, we can't always fellowship in perfect harmony, and we won't always have sheep to talk with. In fact, most of our work for the Lord will be with the goats. And this is easily seen by realizing that the broad way, which leads to destruction, can handle more people than the narrow gate can.

Yes, there are more goats than sheep, but I still like to talk to people who love to talk about God. And I also know that these people not only like to talk about God, they also like to follow God, and it's these people who will end up doing the will of God. I guess the old saying still goes, "Birds of a feather, flock together." I like the flock, but I like it when the flock is made up mostly of sheep, not goats.