



**Summer Fruit-Part 10**  
**Battle to Bear Fruit**  
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Grab your Bibles and turn with me to Proverbs Chapter 4. Proverbs Chapter 4. We should be grateful as we turn there to have such pleasant weather this morning, it's kind of nice, actually. We should be grateful, actually, for the climate we have here in Southern California. For all the people fleeing California they're going to have a hard time getting better weather than we have. And I understand that. I recognize as we have good weather, we're still, as we're heading into the fall months here, I have been praying, along with the rest of our pastors, for minimal rain on the weekends. That would be ideal, I think, if we didn't have a lot of rain. I do think the case was overstated by that 70s song that it never rains in Southern California. I found out, by the way, that Hammond, the guy who wrote this, was from London. So I understand his confusion that he thinks it never rains here.

Of course, it does rain here, but we don't get it very often and not getting as much rain as, say, Portland or Seattle or Cleveland or Pittsburgh. I know that they make fun of us because we're not real good at driving in the rain. We have the storm watch whenever it starts misting. Our local authorities say we have about quadruple the amount of traffic accidents every time it rains here on our local roads. We may take a lot of grief for being challenged in our driving on wet streets, but I'll take the wet streets over the frozen streets any day of the week. Am I right? I mean, I don't care for that at all.

I'll never forget, I was coming home from a winter break in college, driving across the country, and I was on this interstate, the interstates in the middle of this frozen Midwestern state where they put it on this huge mound. Do you know how those are? It's like elevated. And it was my first experience with black ice. I didn't happen to be driving, actually, I was asleep in the backseat. And all of a sudden I start feeling like we're on some spinning ride as we end up on the right side of this mound, in this snow ditch, this pile of snow. And they elected me to see if I could get them out, which I appreciated their confidence in me. Being from Southern California I don't know why they chose me. But I thought, OK, I'll give it a shot. So I'm happy to report that I was successful for about a minute, actually about five seconds, because I got up onto this road again, and of course, on the black ice, I just slid that car right off the other side. I went to the left side, I looked around, thought, OK, they have confidence in me that I can help. I'm going to do this. I got back up on the interstate. I slid all the way across the interstate to the other ditch. So you get the point. I was back and forth and back and forth.

I couldn't wait to get to those sun-soaked, even though it was December, interstates of Southern California as we were headed there. And I recognized how slippery some roads can be. Now some roads you can just put the cruise control on, you can chat, you can turn the music up, roll the windows down, everything is fine. And then there are others where you're white-knuckled, you're grabbing that steering wheel tightly, your forehead is close to the windshield and you are driving with all vigilance. And that is the picture, by the way, of the pathway of righteousness here in Proverbs Chapter 4.



And I want to remind you of this battle, the battle that we talked about and tried to illustrate last week with this pack of dogs that you're walking down the road. Now, I'd like you to picture yourself driving and here's the deal. This is a slippery, elevated road for us too.

Drive on. There's plenty that's going to try to steer us into the ditches on both sides. But drop down to the bottom of this chapter in Proverbs Chapter 4 and see how it's put. Look at verse 25, speaking of your forehead near the windshield, it says, "Let your eyes look directly forward." This is Proverbs 4:25. "Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil." Now that is the goal. That's the heartfelt goal of every regenerate heart. We want that. We'd like to get to the end of our lives and be able to say we walked this path of righteousness with success, with relative success, with increasing success. And we'd love to be able, in the midst of our series, to look back and say we exemplified love and joy and peace and patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. That would be great.

At our funeral, it would be good for people to stand up and be able to say that guy, that gal represented those things and did it well. That is our desire. That's what we would like. But it's going to be a challenge. And if you'd look up at verse 23 in this passage, you'll see you've got to deal with the interior issues. I talked about you being the human brain, walking that pack of dogs with dog brains, and you've got to realize that you have this thing going on inside your own heart, your own mind. It says, "Keep your heart," and here's the word, "with all vigilance." Keep it with vigilance. Make sure you're careful and you're thoughtful and you're cautious. And it says, "Put away from you crooked speech." Talk about that Chihuahua that's always out of control. That tongue, that restless, evil. I mean, you think about your righteous life, you may feel relatively good, but think about your speech. "Put devious talk away from you." Boy, we need defensive driving, cautious driving, careful driving on a slippery road, this pathway of righteousness. It's not easy, but it is worth it because at the end, we do want to not only please the people who we live with in this world, but far more importantly, we'd like to hear "Well done, good and faithful servant." God knows, as the Bible says, Psalm 103, that our feet are clay. He understands that we're just dust. But he expects us to fight this battle with the interior desires of our lives in a way that will produce increasing success in our sanctification. And we want to do that.

We've spent nine weeks dealing with all of the virtues that express themselves in the Bible as the Fruit of the Spirit. But I want to continue this chapter and at least get the last three verses in Chapter 5 of Galatians. So turn there and let's look at this one verse. That's all we'll have time for today. Verse number 24. I'd like to spend, Lord willing, this week on verse 24, next week on verse 25, and the following week on verse 26, as we think about tying this whole series together. If I'm going to bear fruit, there's that battle. Now, we introduced it with this last virtue of self-control. We're going to need to control the members of our flesh, the desires of our lives. This goes back and helps us to think about something that should have happened in your life. It's put in such a huge and dramatic way. The verb here is something that ought to just make us all shudder when we think about how it's described.



It says this and let me read it for you, Galatians 5:24, it says, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have," here's the verb, "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." Now, we couldn't talk through the list of the Fruit of the Spirit without talking about the conflict between the desires of my flesh and the desires of the spirit and this regenerate heart that now, according to Ezekiel and Jeremiah, is supposed to beat in sync with God's will. So I'm regenerate, if in fact I am, and I now have a desire to please God and walk this path. I have the Spirit that wants me to walk this path and is ready to enable and to empower me to walk this path. But I still got this pack of dogs called the members of my body, and they're constantly yipping and pulling me into the ditches. I've got to say, God, this is a struggle and a battle I've got to win. When Paul then gets through with this list, he says to us, I want you to think about your past, that you "have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

But before I look at that, I have to do something that I know is offensive to a lot of you. And I'm sorry, but I have to deal with this phrase at the very beginning. It says, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus," and I can't as a pastor, and I would hope even as your friend, not stop to say let's think about whether that's truly applying to you. Do you really belong to Christ Jesus? He's going to talk about what people who belong to Christ Jesus have done. But I want to stop and I want to ask that question, as I think we always should. And if you're taking notes, this would be the first thing for you to write down here. You need to "Be Sure That You Belong To Christ." This simple phrase, those who literally are of Christ, if you are with Christ, associated with Christ, this genitive construction of this word that you are in his circle, you're in his team, you belong to him. He is your king. He's your master. He is your redeemer. He's your savior.

If that's true of you, that's great. But I don't want to assume it just because you're here. And I say it's offensive to many of you because it's like the instructions you get on the troubleshooting guide when you're trying to get that thing to work, that router or that equipment or that appliance or whatever it is, and the first thing on the list is, "is the device plugged in." And you roll your eyes like, "Of course, of course it's plugged in." But it's there for a reason, because sometimes people trying to make things work and it is not plugged in. I would dare to say that how tragic it would be if we went through this entire thing, you and I, Compass Bible Church, I'm your pastor, and we never stopped and said now, every now and then, we've just got to deal with the issues in your life and ask the question, are you even saved? Are you even a Christian?

And as offensive as that may be to some of you, I just need you to indulge me here for a few minutes and to have us think for a second. Now is that really true of me? Do I really belong to Christ? Because that's all that's going to matter 100 years from now. Really, that will be the determining factor. And to do that, I'd like to look at Jesus' words himself as we think through that question in Matthew Chapter 13. So please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 13 as we ask ourselves the question afresh, as the Bible says we ought to. I mean, I quote this often, but Second Corinthians Chapter 13 says, "Examine yourselves to see if you're of the faith." I often mentioned that Paul even intimated that idea and he reflected that concern even with the pastors who he oversaw, particularly Timothy. He speaks to him. He's got some issues with timidity. And he says you got to solve that problem of timidity. You're afraid to stand up and stand for the truth, and you're afraid of what people think of you. Then he has to deal with



issues in the letters that he writes him and says, you ought to think about where you stand with God.

I mean, he gets back to troubleshooting even in Timothy's life, with "is the device even plugged in?" And I think that's a good thing for us. No matter who you are, no matter how long ago you think you came to faith in Christ. I want us to ask the question, are you sure you belong to Christ? Are you sure? This passage, beginning in verse 1, is helpful for us. It's the parable that's familiar to you, but I want to give you a little bit of the context that may help remind you that what he's about to say is really something everybody needs to hear who's gathered together to listen to the things of Christ. I know that we'd like to say, "Well, of course, I'm a Christian. I wouldn't be at church on a Sunday morning. I certainly wouldn't be out here in a parking lot on Sunday morning if I weren't a Christian."

I would like to say to you anyone who wants to be a Christian is a Christian. Anyone who is pro-Jesus is a Christian. I'd like to say to you, it'd be great if everyone who doesn't want to not be a Christian, well, of course, if you don't not want to be, well, then you are. If anybody is on Jesus' side and in their mind, think I want to associate with him, well, then you are. But that's not how this passage plays out. Verse 1. Matthew 13. "That same day Jesus went out of the house and he sat beside the sea and," here's something to note, "great crowds gathered around him." Now, what he's about to say is something you can see as a pattern in Scripture when great crowds want to sit there and act like he's in charge and he's the rabbi and he's the savior and he's the redeemer and he's the king and we're all a part of your kingdom. He often gives these kinds of parables and teachings that say, "Wait a minute, I don't even know if you guys are rightly understanding this." These clarifying stories.

"So the great crowds gathered around him. He got in a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying," and here's the parable, "A sower went out to sow." Someone's got seeds and they going to go plant those seeds. And the way they do it back in the day, bag over your shoulder, you throw those seeds out there into the soil. Verse 4, "And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path," and that's not the intention, of course, but that's where they are, "and the birds came and devoured them." So there's "soil number one." The well-trodden path, the hard dirt, and I mean, the seed just sits right on top and the birds come and eat it.

Soil number two, verse 5. "Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they didn't have much soil." There was soil. There wasn't much, though. "And immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose, they were scorched. And since they had no root," they had no connection, they had no organic relationship. Oh, they sprouted up and it looked good for a little while, but "they withered away." That's soil number two. Soil number three, verse 7, "Other seeds fell among the thorns." Oh, there's a lot of soil there. As a matter of fact, there's enough soil for the weeds to grow up there, but among the thorns there, "the thorns grew up and choked out the seed." Verse 8. There's the fourth soil. "Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some hundredfold, some 60-fold, some 30.

Now, here's something you should always listen up to when Jesus says it, and that is, "He who has ears, let him hear." And some of us don't hear things like this because we think we



already know it. We think we've already examined ourselves. We think we've already considered ourselves. And we don't give this the proper thought. And here's Christ saying, "Listen, you got ears, you need to hear this." Intervening verses beginning in verse 10, he talks about the purpose of parables and then drop down to verse 18, now he explains it.

"Hear the parable of the sower," verse 19. "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path." There's soil number one. There are people who are not Christians. You'll meet him in the park. You're walking out there and they'll say, "Yeah. You go to church. That's great. That's good for you. Not good for me." They're not interested. They have no confession of faith. They have no interest in your church. They'll be polite about it, perhaps or maybe they're not. Maybe they're hostile toward it. They've got no association with Christianity. They're certainly not sitting here listening to this message, unless you got dragged here by someone and you don't want to be here. But for those of you who want to be here, this certainly isn't you.

Verse 20. "For what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy." Wait a minute. So you're into this. You like it. You have joy being associated with it. You've embraced the truth. The Word, you read it. You study it. You memorize it. You meditate on it. "Yet," verse 21, "he has no root in himself." There's no real connection. It's all superficial. It's all shallow, "but endures for a while." And that may be where some of you are right now. You're enduring in this thing. But here's the problem. When tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. And it may be a matter of time until you are not here and you're not a part of this. Not just in this church, but any Bible-teaching church, you're just not interested. It will be because the pressure gets turned up and there's going to be a price to pay and the price to you is too high, and you'll say, "I don't want to be out of step with the world. I don't want to not have acceptance at work. I don't want to lose my friendships or my family's approval. I am going to eventually bailout." But right now, you're receiving the word with joy. And you told me last week and maybe the week before, "Great sermon, Pastor Mike." You're into this, but you run the clock forward 10 years, you're not in it. But you think you're in it. The device isn't plugged in.

Verse 22. Soil number three. "As for what was sown among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word." We understand that much like soil number two, apparently there's some kind of association with it. It seems to even be more of a joyful reception of the word than even soil number two. "But the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word." This isn't just that they're being persecuted for the word. This isn't because they're aligning with Christ, they're all the sudden now out of step with the world. It's they're out of step with the world because they don't have the same priorities and they want these other priorities. They have concerns, cares. They've got riches they've got to make. They've got money they've got to make. They've got reputations to advance. "And it proves unfruitful."

I remember preaching through this passage when I was in my mid-20s to a church that was filled with people my grandparent's age. And I remember getting so attacked in response to preaching this as I should preach this in light of all the rest of Scripture. And that is that soil one, obviously not saved. Everyone can agree on that. Soil number two, not saved. Soil



number three, not saved. And I got people afterwards writing letters, confronting me, "That can't be. Anyone who responds positive to Jesus is saved. Oh, I know Junior is not interested in God anymore, but he used to be and once saved, always saved and that's what you teach Pastor Mike. So clearly they're fine with God because they walked an aisle, they prayed a prayer, they got baptized, they had a testimony. I know that they have no interest or they're wrapped up in the world's cares and concerns or maybe they just aren't in it because it's just too costly for them. But don't tell me they're not Christians."

I know it's hard for us to look at the fourth soil and only the fourth soil because we like to say, well, maybe those are the varsity Christians there, but it says there in verse 23, there is a distinction between Christians in terms of their fruitfulness and some are bearing more fruit than others. But there's only one kind of soil that bears fruit and it continues to bear fruit and that's the definition of real Christianity, something that has a root and a connection and an organic relationship with God. It is plugged in. Verse 23, "As for what was sown on the good soil," soil number four, "this is the one who hears the word and understands it." There's something about it they get. "He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another 60 and in another 30."

So I got three soils and basically what I'm saying, and I've been preaching it all my life, the reality of how the rest of Scripture helps us understand this, that fruit-bearing is the definition that real faith produces works. That's what James' contention was. That's what the Bible teaches. You don't have any right on any verse anywhere to be able to say, I can take the rest of Scripture and dump it out and say somehow soils two and three are in the category of real Christianity. They are not.

So that means I've got soils two, soils three and soils four sitting here in any average church and that means that two thirds, if I'm going to look at the categories, they're not saved. Eventually, it's a matter of time until the pressure of persecution weeds them out or the desire for other things gets in the way and they're not going to endure. They will not hold their confidence firm until the end.

Jesus goes on in verse 24 and says, I know that's hard, but that's the way it works. "He put another parable before them," verse 24, saying "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field." Well, that's the idea, that's the motif here. "But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, the weeds also appeared. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?'" So here's the objective look at a field and it's got real fruit. It's got real crop producing, bountiful fruit-bearing plants and it's got weeds. It's got phonies. "The master said 'an enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them,'" and can we weed them out? Let's weed the field. "But he said, 'No lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.'"

It may be that you're expecting a 100-fold fruit from everyone and maybe you're looking at somebody. It's hard for you, just like we have no litmus test for you coming and being a part of a small group or being here in our church. I mean, we say you need a testimony, but soil two



has a testimony, soil three has a testimony. We're not vetting people as they get out of their cars and walk to a seat. We realize that in our church we're going to have non-Christians who think they're Christians, non-Christians who say they're Christians. We're not going to weed them out now, but they will be weeded out. "No, and gathering the weeds, you might root up the wheat along with them." Verse 30, "Let both grow together until the harvest."

Now, some are going to bail out on their own. We just learned from the previous parable. They'll be gone and we'll know. But some are going to sit here in church all the way until the end, until the rapture of the Church or until their death. "And at harvest time, I will tell the reapers, 'Gather the weeds,'" and we can see from heaven's perspective the difference, "and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn." Real lasting fruit. Sometimes you can't see the difference from a human perspective. We're looking at the crops and we can't tell. But, you know, you should be able to tell if you're sitting there saying, "Am I really weeds or am I wheat?" Is this device plugged in? Some people just say, "It's on the right shelf. I go to church. Matter of fact, you really chided us pretty hard about being in a small group. Now I'm in a small group." The device is on the right shelf. But you're the one who has to do the heavy lifting of finding out whether you're plugged in. You have to do that.

How do we know? Well, back to our text. Those who belong to Christ, which is the concern, if I'm going to bear fruit, I got to be connected to the vine, John 15. I've got to be belonging to Christ. Well, here's how we know they belong to Christ in our passage. It says, "Those who belong to Christ have," now here's a startling image, "have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires," have crucified the flesh. That means there are soils two and soils three here. They're called weeds in the next parable and they have not crucified the flesh. Then there are those who are real and they have crucified the flesh because all who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh. Crucified the flesh? What in the world are you talking about?

I'd like you to turn to another teaching of Christ on this very topic. It's found in Mark Chapter 8. In Mark Chapter 8, to know whether or not I'm a phony, to know whether or not I am real, I've got to ask myself the question, have I crucified the flesh? Which, by the way, let me make this very clear, no matter what your theological bent is. There is an obvious passive description of my life being associated with Christ's cross theologically in terms of the connection I have with Christ in my justification being that, and here are the words that are used, they're verbs that are in the perfect tense and in the passive voice. And these tenses are important in these verbs. Like when Paul says in Galatians 2:20, he starts the book with this, "I have been crucified with Christ." And you say, "Well, how did that happen?" Well, Romans 6 verse 6, it says that crucifixion, my life has been crucified with Christ. I'm identified with his death. Now, that's a transaction of my crucifixion that God says you had all the penalty of all of the sins that you have committed, if you are a real Christian, dealt with on the cross. It's as though you were punished for your sins at that moment, in the perfect sacrifice of Christ. And that is a passive perfect, "I have been crucified with Christ." I have not what's going on here in Galatians 5:24.

The same image and the image is used a lot. Crucifixion is the centerpiece of our theology. That Christ was crucified in that crucifixion becomes an illustration of many things, including this: that those who belong to Christ, here is an active verb. It's an active verb, an aorist tense



if you care about those things and you ought to, the reality that some point I have crucified my own flesh with its passions and desires. Now, here's the thing, those happen at the same time. But soils two and soils three have not experienced it. And you need to ask yourself as you're sitting here this morning, "Have I crucified the flesh?"

What are you talking about? Mark 8. Look at Mark 8, drop all the way down to verse 34. And again, you see the motif, you see the paradigm, verse 34, "Calling the crowds to him." OK? You got a lot of people who are interested and he says, listen, guys, I've got to talk to the crowds here, along with his disciples. And he says this, "If anyone would come after me..." Well isn't the assembly of the crowd enough of a testimony to you that they're coming after you? No, because what? We see it constantly. John 6, the crowds, "many that we're following him turned away." It was just a matter of time till a lot of these fair-weathered Christians, if you will, they were gone. They were soils two and soils three.

So he wants to talk to the crowds. "If anyone would come after me," and I'm not talking about those who are just sitting here listening to me teach because there are plenty of people, he says, that are here listening to me teach, but they're not coming after me. Here are the things you got to do. Talk about crucifixion. Here's what you've got to do. You've got to "Let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." Deny him himself, take up his cross, follow me. Those three phrases are exactly what encapsulates this concept of crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires. The passions and desires of my flesh, and we talked about this last week, the things that I want to do in my unregenerate state, the ideas I have for my life and my future and my goals, all of those things I've got to say, those passions and desires, I'm now going to crucify those. And that means I'm denying myself the fulfillment of my passions and desires. And I am now willing to take up my cross. I'm going to be crucified. I'm willing to be crucified as it relates to my passions and desires and now I'm going to follow you.

Following you versus following my passions and desires, that's the challenge. That's the tugging and the pulling and the bloody calluses of the members of my flesh as I walk that pack of dogs that wants to go every which direction. I'm keeping them on this path of righteousness. I'm going to have to say I am willing to fight. I'm not going to let the pack do whatever they want. I have to submit myself to Christ and his desires and agenda and will for my life.

Soils two and three have not done that, and they prove they haven't done that because when pressure gets on them, when it starts to hurt their hand, they go, "Owie, owie. I don't like the Christian life if it's going to mean that. Can I have another version of Christianity that doesn't demand all of that from me?" Well, then those people bail out of what is at least is the influence of biblical Christianity. That doesn't mean that they don't have some version of it. There are plenty of versions out there.

And then there is soil number three, and it's got all these priorities and they come in conflict. My passions and desires, "Can I somehow merge Christ with my passions and desires? Can I have him... Matter of fact, let's make him a butler and a life coach, and he can help me accomplish my passions and desires," versus Second Corinthians 5:15 that says I'm no longer living for myself. I'm living for him who died for me and rose again. That, from a human





perspective, is, as Paul put it, wholeheartedly committing myself to that form of teaching that was delivered to me.

That means, I am saying your will, your desires, are going to force me to deny my wills and my desires, at least in the totality of my fallenness. There are lots there that I don't want to do and I'm going to say I'm going to do anyway. I'm going to deny myself. I'm going to be like I am crucified. I'm going to view those passions and desires that are in conflict with following you and I'm going to crucify those. I'm going to be like when the moms brought their teenage sons out to watch the crucifixion of the scum of their society and said, "Watch him die on that cross naked and you better be careful about the things that you want to do in life because you've got to see what it ends with." And as everyone sat there and jeered at the criminals hanging naked on a Roman execution rack, said that's what you should think of what it means to follow your passions and desires, saying you should take up your cross when it comes to your passions and desires and say, I'm mercilessly, I'm ruthlessly saying I'm not interested in fulfilling these things. I'm declaring war, as Peter put it. He knew that war, that internal war, with the desires in my own life. I'm going to say I have to deny those things and be crucified.

I remember preaching this in my 20s too, and I remember the folks coming up to me and saying, "This is varsity Christianity, you don't understand. This is a passage about discipleship. This is not a passage about becoming a Christian." Well, I would note the context of "...calling the super-spiritual seminary graduates to himself." No, "calling the crowd to himself." Not only that, verse 35 should put that to rest. I know that we don't like this, it seems high bar, it seems legalistic, it seems like you're working for your salvation. I'm not saying that. Here's the experience of it. Is salvation free? Absolutely. As someone said to me after the service last night so well, it's that it's free in the sense that you have no currency to be able to pay for this. You can't. It's free, but it's going to cost you everything.

Matter of fact, it's going to cost you the crucifixion of your passions and desires. It's going to require that denial of yourself. It's going to require that you have a new boss. I've said the tripe that we see on bumper stickers like "Jesus is my copilot." You know, he's well too qualified to be your passenger. You understand that, right? He will never sign up for that role. He's firmly ensconced in the leadership of your life or he's not. The only way to do that is for you to slide over and say, "You take it." It's not like, "When my life starts spinning, Jesus, take the wheel, man. That's what I need." No, Jesus is in the driver's seat. He chooses the path. I deny my desires when I want to turn right and you say go straight, I keep going.

Whoever would want to save his life, verse 35, if you really want to be a follower of Christ and that's the only hope you have of being gathered into the barn after your life, or you want to be burned, well, here's the choice you have. You want to "save your life?" Well, you're going to have to "lose it." If you ever thought about that verse? If you want to save your life, I'd like to be... I'd like to go... I don't want to be bundled into bundles and burned. I don't want the punishment of God. I don't want to be punished for my sin. Well, then you're going to have to lose your life. Again, people think that somehow God can be merged into my desires and merged into my life and merged into my priorities. You got to lose your life. "But whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's," the good news, that's what gospel means. The



good news is you don't have to be bundled into bundles and burn. You can go into the barn. Well, then you "will save it." But you've got to be willing to lose your life.

Varsity Christianity? How about verse 36. "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world?" If you get everything that your unredeemed fleshly desires want, what would you have if you look the way you wanted? If you had the money you wanted, you had the prestige, the celebrity, the whatever it is that you want. The respect, the reputation. You had everything you want and "you forfeited your soul." Well, Jesus is saying, can you stop with all the stuff you want? Can you worry about what I want? That's the only way this works. "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" This is a passage about you forfeiting your soul. And I know soil one forfeits his soul and you would agree. But soils two and soils three forfeit their soil. They are not connected. They have no root. They have idolatry, other things that to them are more important than Christ.

"For what can a man give in return for his soul?" I mean, I would hope you'd realize that no price is too high to pay in this life so that you can be gathered into the barn and have the blessings of the unmitigated goodness of God in the next life. Verse 38. "Yeah, but there are a lot of things that if I stand that way, I'm going to be ostracized. The price is too high. My neighbors, my friends, my family, they're going to say I'm a freak." Well, "Whoever is ashamed of me," he says in verse 38, "and of my words..." And he's just delivered them right there. It's in red ink on your Bibles. "In this," here are the people that haven't crucified their flesh, "In this adulterous and sinful generation." They don't care about the boundaries of propriety. They don't care about what... They don't care about what the Bible says. They want to redefine everything. "Let's redefine it all based on what we think is OK." Well, "Of him..." Someone wants to live like that. You're ashamed, you want to be counted with, you know, cool and acceptable with the world. Well, "The Son of Man is going to be ashamed." In other words, you going to forfeit your soul when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. That'd be a good day to be gathered into the barn when the king is ensconced in his throne in Jerusalem.

"It sounds like too much." Well, maybe we've taken a biblical word and not understood it the way we should. You want to summarize this crucifixion of the flesh with its passions and desires? Here's the biblical word for it. Repentance. That's the biblical word. Repentance. And this passage, Galatians 5, is all about me producing fruit and my desire to have more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in life. That's what I need more of that. Well, how am I going to do that? Well, here he ends that list by saying, remember this, that if you belong to Christ, you've already categorically crucified the flesh. You took up your cross one day and that's the testimony you need to look at. Have I in my life said, "I'm done with me being the boss and the king? I'm going to submit all my desires to Christ." There's got to be that. That's called repentance. That means my way is going to be behind me and his way is going to be before me. Whatever that might be, whatever he wants, whenever he wants, wherever he wants. I'm a servant of Christ. A "Doulos," a slave, a bond-servant of Christ. I'll do whatever he says. That's what biblical Christianity is and it's called repentance. Repentance.



So many great words in Scripture that relate to that, "Metanoia" "Azub." The Old Testament "Shub," "Shuwb," all these words that talk about turning, forsaking your way, the idolatry turning from your idols. It's done with my priorities. I'm now going to be about your priorities. Now, does that mean I'm not going to pay my mortgage? I'm not going to eat. No. Of course, God is going to say, hey, here's the right path for you and it's going to involve all the things that you're going to need in this life. But it may not be where you want. It may not be when you want. It may not be of the kind that you want because it's what God wants. And I know in the end, this short little life, it wouldn't be worth it to get everything I want and, in the end, forfeit my soul.

I've given you the whole of the second point but can I at least have you give it a title here? I want you to "Remember Your Repentance." I want you to remember the fact that if you want to bear fruit in your life, as you should, that should be the core motivating desire of your life, you've got to think about your repentance. As long as we're talking theology, think back to the 95 theses of Martin Luther as he pinned it to the Wittenberg door. Now, I know he's dealing with the penance of the medieval church, but the first thing he says is that it's Christ's will, that the whole of the Christian life should be repentance.

And that's the point in our passage. The whole of the Christian life should be repentance. Well, that is the daily repentance of saying my passions and desires. No. That's what that is. But it categorically began with my Christian life by saying, "OK, I'm yours." Was there a time when that happened? Oh, there was a time when I was a kid. I walked an aisle, prayed a prayer, got a new Bible, you know, all the stuff, got baptized in the church. All that. But then there was a time when I did business with God and he wrestled me to the mat and he said, okay, let's stop playing around with this cultural Christianity. Are you ready to really give this up? Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. Anyone who would come after me, that's what you got to do.

Luke 14:33, a pivotal passage. You cannot be my disciple unless you give up all of your possessions. That's what it says. "Well, there's got to be an end-around. Where's the footnote? Got to be something in the languages that can get me out of that one." I'm giving up all of my possessions, under new management. My life is yours. My future is yours. My stuff is yours. Whatever you want. Whenever you want. However you want. That's biblical repentance. That has to be played out on Tuesday afternoon, on Thursday morning, next weekend. You're going to have to say, I remember my repentance and that's why I cannot obey the lust of my flesh. That's why I cannot do what I want. That's why I've got to have this fight between my flesh and my spirit. And I've got to say, I'm going to walk this path as hard and vigilant as I'm going to have to watch my heart. I have to fight this good fight of faith.

Let's look at those two words, passions and desires. Galatians 5:24, "Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." Remember Mel Gibson's movie some years ago? He made the movie and it was called what? The What of the Christ? Passion of the Christ. So that was about like Jesus' goals. Right? What he wanted to accomplish. No. Matter of fact, sometimes we call it The Passion Week, the old school phrase, The Passion Week. Passion. That word made it into English from the Greek word in the New Testament that gives us a sense of what we mean by passion. Passion, of course, is



the suffering of the Christ. Passion Week is the week that he suffered in the Garden in Gethsemane, as he got tried, as he got whipped, as he got beaten, as he got hoisted up on a Roman execution rack outside the walls of Jerusalem. He suffered The Passion Week.

Well, there's a relationship between passion, the things that my flesh wants and what we're talking about. Passion, the passion of suffering. And it's like Christ in the Garden. The height of the passion, really, you could say, it was all beginning, it would play out, but after the Garden, it was when he said, "Not my will but yours be done."

Some of you maybe last week have engaged in some fasting because of our sermon last week. And though I didn't require it. I didn't say you should do it. I mean, the idea as we look at the things of life, we say sometimes I've got to say no to the neutral desire so that I can fight the moral desires of my life and so some of you engaged in that. Now, there was a passion that your stomach dealt with in your brain when you wanted to eat and you didn't eat, the desires of your life became passion, became painful. It made you suffer when you said no. And that's the thing. You indulge your flesh. Well, it'll get hungry. It'll become a monster. Obviously, diminishing returns, that principle. You'll want more and more. You'll go to increasing levels of all kinds of depravity. But when it comes to your desire to say, "I want to serve Christ, I want to do what's right," then you're going to have to have your passions, the things that will cause pain for you if you do not fulfill them and say, "I'm going to be willing to engage my passions, the things that cause me pain when I don't feed them."

I put it this way if your taking notes. "Don't Let Your Feelings Boss You Around." I know last week I talked about that the physical has to yield to the spiritual. And this is the same concept here. If I've got passions, desires that need to be crucified and I'm remembering the fact that I have already done that categorically. Now, Tuesday afternoon, I have to fight that battle. Then what I'm saying is I can't let my desires boss me around even if I haven't eaten all day. That's a neutral thing, not a moral thing. I get it. And I'm going to say, "You can hurt me all you want. I'm not going to let you boss me around." And your desires of the flesh will be very bossy. And you've got to say nope. Passions.

Desires, the next word. This is a word that is translated sometimes in your Bible, is translated lust. "Epithumia." Lust, it's a strong, it's a compound of the word desire. It's a strong desire that you have. It's the same word that Jesus used when he said there will be desires that choke out the word in the parable of the four soils. He talked about that third soil and it's got all these competing interests and those things start to choke out the word. That's the word, the desires choke.

If you love Christ, if you love his will, if you love his word, if something wants to choke that out, how do you respond to that? If after the service you're here with someone you love, your kid, your spouse, whatever, and maybe just your friend and someone comes up to them and starts choking them this morning. How do you respond? If this person comes up and wants to choke, "I just want to choke your friend. I want to choke your friend." I hope that we're going to see a fight break out. We ought to, right? You'll engage in physical hostility at that point. Right? You are defending and protecting someone you love.



And so it is that you have desires that want to choke out God's will in your life. And when you have those desires, sometimes they're passions, they're painful, they're suffering. And you're going to say I'm going to endure that. And then you have other things, you've got to realize these epithumias, these desires, want to choke out the good that God wants to accomplish in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, among a million other things he'd like to do in your life. And you've got to say, "I'm not going to let it happen. You don't get to not only boss me around, you don't get to destroy the good things that God wants to accomplish in and through my life."

The war motif is everywhere in Scripture. I don't have enough time to look at these passages with you, but Colossians 3:5-10. It's a parallel text in many ways to Galatians 5, because the list of the works of the flesh is here. It's a different list, but it's the same set of concepts that you've got all these things, including stuff coming out of your mouth, you have to fight those passions and desires to do the things that God does not want you to do. But it starts with this: "You better then put to death all the things," here's how the English Standard Version translates it, "that are earthly in you." There's something there that is trying to choke out the will of God in you. But you have to fight it. Put it to death. That's the crucifixion motif. I'm ready to let it die. I'm not going to let it die, I'm going to actively engage in it dying.

By the way, are you still in Galatians Chapter 5? Go to the end of the book, Galatians Chapter 6. He speaks now of the cross and crucifixion one last time in this letter to the Galatian churches, and he says this: "Far be it for me to boast," this is Galatians 6:14, "except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And there's the place where I have judicially, forensically, here is justification, I've been associated with his death, so I am going to boast in the fact that you too can have all your sins forgiven by having your association with that Christ. "I am crucified with Christ." That's how he started. Passive, perfect. "I have been crucified with Christ." And he says, I'm going to boast in that transaction. I'm going to get people to be aligned and associated with that. That's what I want. Then he says as long as we're talking about crucifixion, "by which the world has been crucified to me and I to it."

Here's the thing, and I know you know this, but let me just underscore it. It's the First John 2 principle that the desires and passions of this world are going to do nothing but promote the fleshly passions and desires of your heart, the things that God does not want. This world is not your home. "The world," it says, "and its desires," there's our word, "they're all passing away." All the temptations that you're going to face this week, they're going to come from within in your flesh. You got the pack of dogs, but everything along the way that are trying to lure the members of your body off the path, all of those temptations will be gone one day. They will pass away. But the one with the bloody calluses, the one who does the will of God will endure forever.

You've got to fight this good fight of faith. The war motif is here. All I'm saying by quoting Galatians Chapter 6 verse 14 is this: It's going to change your relationship with the world. And by the way, did you notice soils two and three, it's the world that gets in the way? Some of you right now are too associated with this world, too associated. Matter of fact, some of you don't involve yourself like you should in the body of Christ because you want to leave more time for that. You understand the Bible says, as you see the day approaching, we ought to be more



committed to our time together than ever before. "Yeah, but I want what Orange County families should be all about. But I want these things that I want to accomplish that people would expect if we were in this stage of life." Listen, we need to be just done with that. Because of the Cross of Christ and my association with that cross, not only in the perfect passive tense, but in the active sense in which I did in the arist active sense I once said I am crucifying my flesh and now I'm living out that repentance every day.

I'm saying my relationship with the world is different now. What I need is more Christian fellowship. I need more engagement in ministry. I need more time with God's people. I need to say that the things that I'm going to sacrifice by being with God's people are worth it. We need each other now, the Bible says more than ever before, because the day is closer now than it's ever been. Just remember the world and its desires do not end well. Change your relationship with the world and maybe you'll see the passions and desires of your flesh not be quite so enticed every week.

Sermons like this about the gospel, focusing on what it is to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Christ aren't very welcomed in our culture. Because we love comfortable things. We'd love a comfortable Christianity. On my road trips across the country, of course, these were college days, I had no money. My parents didn't give me a credit card, so I was just whatever I had in my wallet. I would pass these signs after a long stretch without an exit, and I would see the signs for the motel and it would say, you know, "Comfortable bed in a warm room. Forty-nine dollars." I can't afford that. We'd pull off to the side of the road and we'd sleep in the car. Have you done that before? Like a homeless person, I would sleep in the car in college. Thanks, mom and dad. I would sleep in the car. It was painful. You wake up sore, you might be healthy as a, you know, as a 19, 20-year-old, but it was just painful. I didn't have the forty-nine bucks to bust for my comfortable bed and warm room. Someone would have to wake up every couple of hours to turn the car on for 30 minutes to get the heater to work.

Speaking of forty-nine dollars, that's the average price that they're charging right now for doggie motels in Orange County. Did you know that? Doggie board and care facilities. Now, this is just an illustration, so don't be offended, dog lovers, but God gave your dog paws and claws, big jaws and sharp teeth. And our local and very successful dog boarding care, I'm assuming it's successful, maybe you own it. I don't know but, it advertises that even when your dog gets seven trips outside to go potty, as it says, he'll be in a nice, carefully enclosed area, safe from all the elements of the outside world. That there are, and it advertises this on the website, doggie cots for your forty-nine dollars, cozy doggie cots. That they have TV's in every room and they play matinees all day long. At night, when your doggie is in his comfortable bed, your doggy cot, classical music plays in the background.

Don't send me letters, it's fine. You want to pay forty-nine bucks for that, have at it. But God designed that dog to do more, to endure more, to fight through more than the classical music's too loud or the bed is too hard. God designed that dog to conquer the elements. We've domesticated them, I realize that. But in a culture of comfort, if that's the way you want your dog to live, it certainly speaks to the way you think we should live. And what I'm saying is God has designed the Christian life for you to fight. He's given you spiritual paws and claws and teeth and jaws, and he said, you've got to fight the good fight of faith.



Some of us are hoping that at the end of our lives, speaking of your funeral, that they'll get up and talk about how you were loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faith, gentle, self-control. But you don't want to fight the good fight of faith. Paul says, I'm going to pummel my body and make it my slave. So at the end of my life, I'm not just caught..., so people don't look back and say, "Man. What a hypocrite he was." I exhort you to remember your repentance. If you belong to Christ, I know you've taken up your cross. Some of you haven't. Maybe today's the day for you to do that. Matter of fact, I would urge you, because you don't know when that gathering into the barn is going to be. And then I would say this: let's engage in what it takes to say to our desires this week, you are not the boss of me. Use those spiritual claws, those jaws, those teeth and fight. That's the motif of Scripture when it comes to your sanctification with a bloody image of crucifixion.

Let's pray. God, the sobering words of Scripture are hard for us sometimes to grapple with because we are not only in a worldly culture of comfort and convenience, but our spiritual culture, as is exemplified by the top-selling books in Christian bookstores these days, it is a culture of comfort and convenience. We'd love for you to be our butler, our maid, our life coach, make everything easy for us. And yet to parent like a Christian, it's going to be a fight. To deal with our desires in our jobs and the constant pressure to compromise is going to be a fight. To deal with this world when we need to unplug, decompress and recreate, it's going to be a fight that the world's going to offer all kinds of things to us that are not in keeping with your will.

So God help us to fight this week to fight the good fight of faith when the desires want to choke out the good that you want to accomplish in us and through us. Let us realize that this pathway of righteousness is not a broad, sun-soaked highway where you can put the cruise control on. It's a slippery path. It's a narrow road. We need you to help us, God, empower us, please, as we hope to see more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in our lives as we think back to the crucifixion of our desires and our passions. Make it real for us this week as we engage in the fight.

In Jesus name. Amen