



Hyper-Calvinist Pastors become Fruit Inspectors; Their Sheep Search Desperately for Assurance from False Motivation; the Lord's "Woe" of Matt 23:13

Here are some of the problems:

- When a pastor teaches "limited atonement" he may never assume a member of his flock is truly saved until that member continuously produces the alleged fruits of that conversion.
- Both the sinner and the pastor have to find some reason within the life of the individual which indicates that person is among the elect.
- Because of this approach, the emphasis is taken off the work of Christ and the grace of God, and instead placed on the works of the believer beginning with public repentance.
- Salvation and assurance are therefore not determined through the individual's faith in Christ but in whether he and/or his pastor feel his fruits are sufficient to warrant that conclusion.
- Since the elect are the only ones who can be saved then only the elect can do good works and this breeds legalism.
- Further, everyone must also be wary of the danger of "temporary faith," the idea that even a nonelect person may for a time produce fruits indistinguishable from those of an elect person.
- Consequently, the assumption is reached that if a person does not constantly demonstrate a repentant attitude accompanied by a consistent lifestyle of good works, then he is not elect but instead reprobate.
- This results in variations on the theme taken up by legalistic fundamentalists who say, "He had a *head* belief and not a *heart* belief."
- Another tragic consequence is the plaintive assumption, "I will never be good enough to be saved."
- These false conclusions are conceived right out of the heart of hell and although honestly believed they are wrong and produce self-imposed and self-induced misery.
- This blasphemy withholds the love and forgiveness of God through faith in Christ and prevents large numbers of people from entering into the royal family although they are members of local churches.
- Just as tragic is the circumstance of those who are saved but waste a lifetime of energy desperately trying to prove it.
- We are driven to the same conclusion reached by our Lord in His assessment of the hyper-Calvinists' first-century counterparts, recorded in:

Matthew 23:13 - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."

Continuing with Dr. Hodges's quote of Bell:

Yet to make love and forgiveness conditional is not only a violation of Scripture, but also of common sense. An individual will always respond more positively to the one who offers unconditional acceptance. Indeed, such acceptance fosters repentance. On the other hand, if one requires proof of repentance before fully accepting an individual, one usually produces not repentance, but a hardened heart!

Dr. Hodges concludes by reflecting upon this final quote from Dr. Bell's book:



That's a great couple of paragraphs if you ask me. And what I want to say then is that the concern with the issues that relate to the Gospel is a concern that reaches across ecclesiastical lines and professional lines and theological lines and there are people all over the evangelical world who feel that this is a major issue and that unless the professing church is very careful it is in serious danger of losing the message of God's love and unconditional grace.

12. What Dr. Hodges discerned fifteen years ago has continued to increase in its appeal to the masses and this theology has won over the leadership of mainline denominations, infiltrated their seminaries, and is taught from their pulpits.