

Enlightened but Lost
True Church Conference 2020
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Let's go to Hebrews 6 this morning. Excuse me. We're very intentional at the, um, True Church Conference to be focused on taking sound doctrine and looking at just how can we apply these things in the local church. Of course, the Scripture gives us much in the way of application of sound truth into church life. Um, we're not interested in pragmatism, we're not interested in what works, we're interested in what shows off God's wisdom and glorifies God. We want the church to give the statement to the world that God is all wise and his power will accompany his word in building his church, and so I try to dedicate my time to looking at texts, glean the exegetical truths, and build off our 40 years of doing it wrong and finally learning how to do it right. So much of what I will share with you is, is, is born out of the laboratory of us, um, struggling with how does this look and I would say the great majority, maybe all of those who've connected with us as a church plant or a partner, basically came and said the same thing. "Can, can you show us how, what it looks like? We believe these things, we just haven't seen it or experienced it." And my pat answer and many of you remember this, is, "Well, you, I can trust you. We've done everything wrong," and I mean that genuinely. Ah, this church looks absolutely nothing like it looked 30-35 years ago and when we began the reforms to be pleasing to God. But the one thing that drives us is the glory of God and this conviction, that God's glory or the centerpiece of God's glory for both time and eternity is his church. For time, that's local churches and so we passionately want to see his churches function in his truth by his power which will magnify his glory in the earth.

And boy, I don't want to chase this thing very long because I'll never get off of it, but if you want to impact society for justice and goodness, then build sound churches. I believe in a sloshing over effect, sound churches, ah, slosh over the, the salt and the light the culture needs. But I'm telling you, if Satan can get us chasing those secondary things, he'll get us off of the long difficult work of pastoring true churches for the glory of God.

Well, we're in Hebrews 6 and brothers encouraged me to revisit this. I preached through Hebrews some years ago and do y'all get this way? When I preach, I make 3-4 years to get through Hebrews and it's encouraging but it's discouraging because when you get through you think, "Man, I need to start over again and do that right." I learned so much and going back and restudying this text, um, I've just learned so much again, and the word of God is inexhaustible. It's absolutely rich. It's God's truth. And by the way, was

that a good word last night? Oh, my goodness, praise the Lord. And then after I go this morning, Tom Nettles is gonna come. I was gonna say my old church history professor. I don't mean that, Tom, is you're old, I mean, it's just been a long time since I was there. And both of these men have impacted my life for good, but why couldn't I be given just one of their brains? I mean, I hear these guys and I say, "Why didn't I get a brain like that?" It reminds me of what, um, Adrian Rogers said about, ah, Dr. R. G. Lee when he became the pastor of the Bellevue Baptist Church, he said, "Dr. Lee, when you die can they take your brain out of your head and put it in my head?" Dr. Lee said, "Son, that'd be like putting a, a grand piano in a broom closet." Thank God that in his sovereign goodness and grace he can use us regular guys.

Hebrews 6, beginning in verse 4. I've got a little allergy throat thing so bear with me.

4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. 7 For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; 8 but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.

We're talking about pretenders, unmasking the tragedy of unregenerate church membership. I don't want to say a lot on that other than just to say that's been our experience. Ah, the second case of church discipline we had here at Grace Life Church and we're 3+ decades ago when that happened, ah, was to remove 500 people from our membership roll. And by the way, we didn't do that exactly right. We did the best we knew how and understood, but we've learned a lot since then of how to more wisely do that because we didn't actually know fully the case of all 500, we just knew we couldn't find them and those we could find were not interested. So we early on, and I mean, I hadn't been a Christian all that long, I didn't grow up in church, I came from agnostic background, so I, I'm converted, I, I join a Southern Baptist Church, didn't know what a Southern Baptist was honestly, still not sure what they are. And by the way, some of the godliest and best men I know are Southern Baptist without exception. Good men of God that I respect and I appreciate greatly, but it's become a big tent with a lot of stuff in it that's difficult to deal with. But nevertheless, um, in those days, I become a Christian, I join a Baptist church and I just start learning and I begin to question why is this this way? And often I would talk to older pastors and they'd say, "That's just the way it is. That's just, that's the way it works." And I thought, "Well, that's not biblical," and thank God for church history, I'd go study church history and I'd find out, well, Baptists used to do it the other way. Can we not still do it that way today?

So that was kind of the background of my heart and our reforms but one of the key things is this whole thing of, of how we receive members and how we discern as faithful pastors and elders who are those the Lord is adding to his church. Can I emphasize that for a

moment, brothers and sisters? It's his church. It's his bride. We are under-shepherds, we are stewards of another's property in this thing and so we set out on, on a quest here at Grace Life to learn how to do that better and I think at the last Southern Baptist Convention, I'm not picking on Southern Baptists today but they are the largest Baptist Protestant, ah, denomination, I think they said that we, we had lost, or rather gained 7 million new members in the last 20 years but lost over 6 million members, and that doesn't include those who died, and so there's just a huge turnover and we all know that, ah, the average situation is 30-50% of our membership rolls are people who never even attend church. It's a tragedy. It's, it's, it's, it's a great disservice and dishonor to our Lord to not strive to deal with it. Now look, I've been at it 40 years, I don't think you can work harder and you're still not gonna get perfect, okay? But that doesn't mean we don't need to try to do a better job of making sure Christ's church looks like what Christ wants it to look like.

Now the book of Hebrews was written, of course, to the Hebrew church, the Jewish church. Certainly it was written to strengthen them in the faith, ah, obviously it was written to hold some of them back from apostatizing or at least being on the road toward apostasy, ah, particularly as, as Brother Tom pointed out yesterday, the, the Judaizers or the emphasis to synchratize grace with law which you can't do. Once you do that, you lose grace but that's what was common in that day. And so we have this passage that I'm convinced speaks to those who had a work of God in their life, who had things going on under the influence of Bible preaching and the Holy Spirit's work that brought them perhaps close to conversion but they were not yet converted. Spurgeon said this, "It will be equally terrible to be aroused to escape the wrath to come and then shake off the warning influence to go back to our insensibilities, and every awakening which is thrown away leaves the soul more drowsy than before."

Now in looking at this, again, I believe strongly that Hebrews 4:4-6 or really the whole section is dealing with those in the church who are not truly converted. I particularly believe that among the Jewish congregation or the, the congregations that were predominantly Jewish, there was a lot more of this than even among the Gentile congregations. Those, there are always some so I think as you, as you exegete Hebrews, I think you need to keep that in your mind that he's writing to a congregation that is, is a mixed multitude and he certainly comes down to brass tacks in this section of Scripture.

Now let me give you some thoughts here and this will help us, and all of this comes to the end, please get all three of my sessions so we can piece it all together with some application for how we do our work of receiving members, okay? That's what we're getting to and, um, well, first of all, introducing why I believe this is referring to those who are not yet saved.

1. We need to remind ourselves there is a non-saving repentance. There is a repentance that is not associated with true conversion. The Greek word for repentance is used, well, it was used commonly in the day the Scriptures were being written, and it has basically the simple idea to think differently afterwards. The original word, to think differently afterwards.

Let me just blitz through some texts here. John 6:70-71, "Jesus answered them, 'Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is the devil?'" Or, "is a devil," I should say. "Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him." So here we have Judas among the 12 and Jesus says, "I chose you but yet you are a devil." Interesting. John 13:27, and "After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Jesus therefore said to him, 'What you do, do quickly.'" Chronologically going forward, Matthew 27:3, "Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse," same Greek word as that's always used for repentance but obviously this is a non-saving repentance. He looked back and he saw some of the difficulty and the bad consequence of his choices and he felt bad about it. He felt bad afterwards. That's repentance but it's a non-saving repentance. That's nothing to do with true conversion. And then reflecting on Esau in Hebrews 12:17, "For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears." There was a remorse after the fact of selling his birthright, he does feel bad about it, that is the consequence that it brought him, the negative consequence, but this is not saving repentance. And then 2 Corinthians 7:10, "For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but," in contrast, "the sorrow of the world produces death." There's a sorrow that's associated with a true, biblical, saving repentance and there's a sorrow that is worldly that's centered on self and not our offensiveness to a holy God that can be, you could use the word repent for it but it's not a biblical or saving repentance.

True repentance is coming to right thinking. Coming to right thinking, right thinking about yourself. You begin to view and embrace who you are according to who God says you are, a wretched, deplorable enemy of God; wholly and woefully offensive to his holy law. You begin to think right about God, that he's not just a, a higher version of us or a little better version of us. He has, he has transcended in holiness. He is radically different from us and superior to us and glorious above us. And we become to right thinking about salvation, and salvation is none of us and none of our works and none of our religion, salvation is by grace through faith in his Son Jesus Christ.

Sometimes I'll use the phrase there's a primary repentance and a secondary repentance. Often when we preach repentance, we talk about drinking and smoking and cussing and all the other things that we ought to preach about, but that, that never ends. As a matter of fact, after you get converted and, and you grow in Christ and grow closer to this holy God, you find more and more you need to repent of. So if you tell a guy you've gotta repent of all your sins, he can't do that. He don't know them all yet. So I call that a secondary repentance. You can do secondary repentance and not have repented unto salvation. You can be sorry about some bad stuff you've done and not be saved. But a primary repentance is, "I turn away from, I reject anything and everything other than Jesus Christ. I turn from any hope in religion and baptism and, and morally or ethically cleaning up my life. I turn from any hope in anything other than simple, abandoned, bankrupt dependence on Jesus Christ." That's primary repentance but primary repentance will always have the secondary repentance. They're inseparable. Jesus didn't, doesn't save

you just to get you over your drinking problem or your lust problem. Now he does want to do that. He wants you to turn from looking to all others other than himself and turn to him.

Well, I got off track there. There's a non-saving repentance. Secondly, there's a non-saving faith. *Pistis*, the Greek word for faith is, means the conviction of the truth of anything. Just coming to a conviction that something is true, doesn't necessarily mean you've come to conviction about what is required for salvation, that is, that you hold it to be true. John 3:2, Nicodemus, "this man came to Him by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know,'" Nicodemus believed something here, "we know You've come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Nicodemus says, "We know You've come from God. We know that God has given You this power." He believed some true things about Jesus but it was not a believing unto salvation. Agrippa, Acts 26:27-28, "King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do." And, "Agrippa replied to Paul, 'In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.'" Agrippa believed some things genuinely but this is not a saving faith or a saving belief. 1 Corinthians 15:2, "by which you've also been, uh, are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed," same Greek word again, "believed in vain." A believing here but a believing that has no saving effect, a believing not connected with true regeneration. Then James, the verse we think of often, "You believe that God is one," James 2:19, "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder." Demons believe but it's a non-saving belief, a non-saving faith.

And I'm gonna really dive into some things about James 2 in the third session that connects to, let me throw this thought out at this point, that, um, I'm convinced biblically and I hope to show this clearly, that the one true, almost 100% proof that one has come to saving faith is an enduring love for a true church, an enduring love for the local church that is true. Now not to mean an enduring love for the average evangelical congregation. I mean, once a church has functioned in the truth and is walking in the truth where, let's say, a good majority of the attenders are really regenerate and have a Gospel humility, if you're not drawn to that, if you can abandon that, you're not his. Now I'll, I'll, I'll use a lot of texts to show that truth in probably the third session.

3. The terms used here are not the normal terms to describe the saved. He says in verse 4 they, these people were enlightened, verse 4 again, they tasted the heavenly gift, verse 4 again, they're partakers of the Holy Spirit, ah, verses 4 and 5, they tasted the good word of God, they tasted the powers of the age to come. So notice here, tasted, tasted, tasted, three times and then enlightened and then partaker. Now in contrast, Jesus didn't say taste this bread, he said eat this bread. It's a different Greek word. It means to swallow and devour.

So I believe it's, it's very clear that the author makes a strong effort here to show those who are being wrought upon by God's Spirit, something true is happened, happening to them, they're beginning to grasp, there's an enlightening or, or, or, or an illumination in their hearts and minds about the true things of God. They may be showing some outward

manifestations that look like the real thing but they only taste it. They didn't swallow. They were close but not yet truly converted. For example, contrast the word enlightened, taste, taste, or tasted, and partakers with the typical New Testament terms for true conversion. For examples, saved, salvation, belief, trust, faith, called, elected, chosen, born again, made alive with Christ, new creation, and many others. Those are very different type terms than just tasting it or enlightened. So it seems that the author is going to a great, and I'm convinced it's Paul, going to great, ah, pains to point out there's a difference here between what I'm talking about concerning these people and those who are truly converted.

A good cross reference for this is Matthew 4:16, "The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light." There was something of an, an, an illumination. There was something of an enlightenment that went on with Jesus being present, them hearing him teach or hear of his teaching, his miracles, but it doesn't mean they were all saved. "And to those who were sitting in the land and the shadow of death, upon them a light dawned." Because seeing the light and receiving the light are very different things. Um, I'm convinced in my ministry far too often, honestly because I didn't really know well how to counsel a seeker, that I often added people to the local church who were enlightened but not truly converted.

Now, I, boy, I have to throw out a word of caution here because some of you are like me, you, you struggle with the OCD idolatry. You're just, you see something like this, you come out of, ah, the, the loose, shallow, hoop jump, easy believism approach to adding church members and you go too far and you almost make it a 20 year process before somebody can join the church. That's why Brother Jono Sims' message on church discipline is essential for you to hear so you can understand there is a backside to this thing; that there will be those who come in despite our best efforts, and we're not to wait for full, mature, spiritual fruit before we receive someone for baptism, and that's why we have a provision given to us by God to remove those from the fellowship who prove they were never really of us.

These things work together and I would say probably the thing that, um, Brother Tom, a thing that forced us to full-bore reformation here was church discipline. I kept thinking, "Why am I disciplining everybody in the world in this church?" This is 30 years ago and it's as if God said to me, and I don't mean that literally like the guy, I think Dr. Rogers again said that if, if God'd say that, he said, "Well, it, it, it, did God tell you that?" He said, "Well, it was louder than that." It was like so clear that God said, "Well, you've got a problem on the front end. You'd better get down to doctrine of evangelism and the doctrine of conversion and the evidences of true repentance and faith. You need to get that down."

And here's what tickles me, the guys who argue with me and this whole thing, boy, I don't want to chase these rabbits, this whole thing of spontaneous baptism, um, here's what I want to ask, "How good are you guys doing at church discipline?" You get faithful in church discipline, I guarantee you it's gonna change some of your notions about spontaneous baptism. Church discipline is not fun and we may have done more of it than

any church in the Southern Baptist Convention and I mean that, we may have. I don't know. I'm not bragging about, just maybe true, and it's never been fun. It's taken, well, it's taken a decade off my life. But if you get honest about church discipline, it'll cause you to get honest about, "Are my approaches to receiving members into the church biblical and sound?"

Well, getting back to what we're about here, um, receiving members and trying to discern is this person just enlightened or are they truly converted? 4. The context is clearly talking about the unconverted. In verses 7 and 8, verse 7 he says, "For ground that drinks the rain," now in the context here, the ground that drinks the rain includes both false professors and the truly saved. They've drunk in some of the truth of Christ, "which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation," that's the truly saved, "useful to those," ah, for "those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God." Now verse 8, "but," in contrast, the other group that drunk in some of the true rain, the Gospel, the truths of Christ, they drank some of that in, "it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned." Is this not the perfect parallel to the parable of the soils? The seed fell on the hardened ground, the birds pluck it away. It was true, there wasn't anything wrong with the seed and then the seed fell on the rocky ground and it didn't have any depth and it sprang up quickly but then it's scorched in the sun. It had no lasting faith. It wasn't true. Something true happened, they looked like God was doing something in their lives and I believe based on this text, God was doing something but they did not come to true conversion. Then the thorny soil sprouts up and gets choked out and no fruit. But then last one, the good soil, and it yields a crop some hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

And 5, the reason I believe this is referring to those who have never been truly converted, if they are saved and then unsaved, they cannot be saved a second time. Hebrews 6:6, "and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame." Now in context, I believe he's talking about someone who, ah, sets Christ aside and full-bore re-embraces the, the law of Moses and said, "This is my approach to salvation." If they do that, they basically hold Jesus up to say he is worthless. They put him to open shame.

So I, I want to be careful here, um, that we don't get too simplistic and, and remember the historical context. He's talking about those who ultimately...so what I'm saying is there may be a lot of people somewhere in between full-born apostasy and being enlightened but not yet converted, but basically what we're talking about here, these are hypocrites, these are pretenders, these are not true converts that look like the real thing, and ultimately over time they are shown to be that by the fact that they fall away from a true church, a healthy, glory of God focused, Christ honoring, Bible saturated local church.

Now dissecting enlightened. Just some thoughts about this word enlightened in verse 4. Let's look at it again, "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened," and then he adds on and I think these things kind of overlap and interconnect, "have tasted the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit," verse 5, "have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come." I think I've got six messages on

that. Um, there's just a lot there, first of all, that we can't grasp. There's some mysteries here that you can't completely grasp. If you think this thing is gonna be like a mathematical formula and we're gonna come up with something whereby we can check off these eight things and know for certain if a guy ought to be received into a church or not, it's not gonna happen. It's almost an art form. Matter of fact, when, ah, 30 or so years ago when I became so convicted that I knew we were wrong, I knew what we were doing was wrong, I just didn't know what was right, and thus the True Church Conference and Anchored in Truth Ministries was just put together to help other guys in that struggle. What, what's a good pattern to follow, not an absolute, but what's a good pattern to follow just trying to do this right.

And so I told the staff nobody's gonna counsel with anybody here who's coming for baptism except myself. I didn't do it because I didn't have, I didn't do that because I did not have confidence in the staff, I did it because I needed the practice. I needed to pray. I needed to open the word. I needed to counsel with seekers until I felt that I had some good wisdom about what does true conversion look like. And again, in the third session we'll get down to brass tacks on how we approach that here and, and we're not perfect but I can say this, I would say at least 90% of our baptismal, ah, members, new members are faithful two years later, and honestly, I'm not exaggerating, 30-35 years ago it used to be right the opposite of that. Um, my, my problem with, with evangelicals and Baptists in general is why nobody's asking these questions. My problem, you know, who are we gonna cooperate with when churches are woefully unwilling to do any of this? How do we plant churches together? How do we do missions together? Even though there's good and godly men, matter of fact, I know a lot of good and godly pastors out there and their hands are just tied and they're just not able to get anywhere, and they've tried the best they know how and my heart goes out to them. But my point is this is God's church. It deserves our very best efforts for his glory.

Dissecting enlightenment. The Greek word for enlightenment here is, is, is a word that just simply means to shine a light; to illumine. But something that's interesting, this particular Greek word is used nowhere else in the Bible for conversion. That's pretty strong. Nowhere else is it used in reference to the new birth or conversion. So when you see the word "they were once enlightened," it, it does not mean that they heard and believed. It does mean they heard and understood. They were grasping some real stuff, they were beginning to see some real things but they had not come to the point of true conversion.

In John 1:9, "There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man." It doesn't mean that every man was saved. Ephesians 1:18 talking now to believers, Ephesians 1:18, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened," in other words, that you'll keep gaining more knowledge. Now the gaining more knowledge did not convert them, they're, it's to grow in their conversion or to grow in sanctification. So that's the way this word is used there.

So these unbelievers gained knowledge but did not have changed hearts. The work of the Spirit has occurred whereby their minds were made capable of understanding some of the

things of God. A grace gift of mind enlightened knowledge was given to them, and I'm convinced this is a step beyond the natural knowledge of God's revelation through creation and conscience. All men are accountable under the, we might say the broad umbrella of the general call of God and creation in conscience is prime, a part of that but it's more than that. There are those who are wrought upon in some ways by the preaching of the Gospel in the Spirit whereby they are enlightened but not yet converted.

These things are spiritually appraised, 1 Corinthians 2:14 tells us. A spirit, the, the only way they could begin to grasp and embrace some of the things concerning Christ and the Gospel in true salvation was that God was enabling. The word of God is a blazing light but to the unenlightened it's like a blind man before the sun. He must be enlightened before he can understand something of the things of God.

Now here, here, let me back up and, and throw this out there. In, in my pilgrimage as a pastor and I want you to know, my pilgrimage is, is, is repenting and growing and repenting and growing, it just never ends. But I, I came to realize some time ago that I had the most simplistic view of the Holy Spirit. It was like God the Father is sovereign and infinite, God the Son is sovereign and infinite, but the Holy Spirit does two or three little simple things and that's all he can do. He can restrain sin in the world. He convicts the world of sin and righteousness and judgment to come. He has to draw sinners and perform regeneration. He helps us understand the Bible and illumines our understanding as Christians. But he doesn't do anything else. I'll go into that in more detail in the next session, but this text made me grapple with the Holy Spirit has a lot of things he does and he doesn't call a Baptist committee meeting to find out if he can do it. He just does what he does according to his own will, obviously the will of his Father, and we'll talk about some of those in more detail in the next session.

Well, now three what I call CPAs, conclusions for practical application from the truths of this text. There might be 25 but I just want to point out three things and we're done. Those who are enlightened yet lost, they know or believe it's true but it's not experiential. They know something is true, they, they're drawn to it, they see it, but it's not experiential knowledge. They have a general knowledge but not experiential. Can I say again we believe in experiential religion. You must be born again. You did not just come to intellectually embrace some facts about Jesus Christ. Something happened in my car in February of 1979 listening to a Gospel preacher on the radio. I cannot explain it except I opened a Bible later and Bible teachers later began to teach me the word of God and I said, "That's what happened." I didn't know to call it saved. Other people said, "You got saved." I said, "Saved from what? I don't know what you mean." I just knew God invaded my life and there was a, a huge joy and, and, and peace. The love of God was overwhelming to me through Jesus Christ and then, I don't know how this fits your theology, but then in the next several weeks I came to a heavy sense of my woeful sinful condition before God. How do you explain that? You can't, you can't manufacture that. That's not in a seminar but you've got to experience those type things to know that you're his. Experiential religion.

Well, there, there, there, their's is a general knowledge, not experiential knowledge. To those who are enlightened and saved, there's also an experiential knowledge. A couple of cross references. Ephesians 1:18-19, "I pray that the eyes of your heart," not just the mind, the eyes of your heart "might be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. And these are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might." That just, that just bleeds with experience. I want you to know, to grasp, to embrace, to experience the power of God in your life as you go from the moment of conversion and through your sanctification and growth as a child of God. Romans 7:24 as Paul says, "Wretched man that I am!" That's not just an intellectual assent. Paul expresses he feels this.

So first of all, the enlightened and lost have a general knowledge but not an experiential knowledge. 2. It's mind-centered and not heart-centered. Mind-centered and not heart-centered. Can, can, can, and I, you know, I'm just gonna talk plainly pastor to pastor, church leader to church leader. Have you brothers found out that when you put the banner up that I'm a reformed Baptist, that you draw some really crazy people? Some really crazy people. Matter of fact, you get them first, Brother Seth. You get them first and God tests you to see if you'll get through them before he gives you the good guys. And I know it is funny but it's, it's no fun. Satan planted a lot of tares among the reformed. I'm not so sure we've done any better than the Arminians. Just because they fly the banner and they've got the right confession in their drawer doesn't necessarily mean they've experienced a conversion that brings forth a Gospel humility whereby they love their local church and love their Christ and love their elders and love the word of God, and can say no to their personal preferences or their idols of whatever it is. You know why? Because it's all, it's all in, it's just a mind thing. Their heart hadn't been changed. It's, it's mind-centered and not heart-centered.

William Goe was my go-to commentary for Hebrews. If you're gonna preach through Hebrews, you've gotta get Goe. He says the enlightened and lost have the word swimming in the mind only, it has not dived into the heart. Good way to say it. The enlightened and saved, the heart is deeply affected. They fear him, trust him, they desire to know him, to walk in his truth.

But let me caution you here. I like the way the Puritans say it, there's the germ of these things at least there. There's, there's the seed of these things. So be careful that you're not looking for a full, ah, bearing of fruit in these areas but there's a seed of it. Here's what you find when you counsel someone about their conversion and you start showing them what the Bible says about loving the word of God, hating sin, etc., you'll see that they didn't really think about it that much and once the word said it, they light up. They'll say, "Yes." So when we counsel someone, we're not counseling them to tell them whether or not they're saved, we use the word of God so that they can tell us, "Yes, based on what the word says, that's what I've experienced." It's out of the heart.

John 17:3, and "This is eternal life, that they may know You," not just know about You, "know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent."

3. The enlightened and lost have a knowledge that makes them proud. We actually hit on that, didn't we? A knowledge that makes them proud. Now, a new convert and one who hasn't been perhaps taught well or not disciplined and disciplined well is gonna have the residues of pride constantly creeping up. So I don't mean the absence of pride but I mean there is the trajectory of confessing their pride and rebuking their pride and growing more and more in humility to honor God and serve God. And again, this should always be seen in the expression of a devotion and faithfulness to a local church.

We, we are rabidly local church centered at Anchored in Truth. All we do is send out preachers and plant and revitalize churches. We don't do anything else. If you've got basketball for Jesus, I praise the Lord for that but we don't do that. We just do local churches because that's, that's, you know, you know, I've even challenged some of my brothers about what I call expositional idolatry. Now you can't do much more exposition than I've done the last 40 years but you can get to the point where you think exposition is the end. Exposition is not to the end, not the end, a true church is the end. As far as I know when we get to heaven there'll be no expository preaching but there will be a church. Now don't misunderstand me. You better not come up with anything in your theology or in your methodology in the local church that don't come from sound exegesis of the text. Matter of fact, as we've preached through books of the Bible here, this happened more 20 years ago than now, we'd come to something in the text and realize we're not doing that so we'd have a business meeting the next week and change our policy manual, and that's just a beautiful way to grow a church. As you grow through, and theology needs to be learned in the context of exegesis in a local church where it's being embraced and applied. That keeps the pride knowledge factor down when there has to be an application in the body, not just an accumulation in the mind. Though I'm thankful for systematic theologies and all the help that they are, here's what I'm saying: nothing replaces the local church. Nothing.

Anyway, the enlightened and lost have a knowledge that makes them proud. 1 Corinthians 8:1, "Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies." These people can congratulate themselves on their understanding and on their virtuous works. Matter of fact, they can make – listen to me – they can make salvation by grace through faith a proud work. They can be very proud that they found the truth. They found the doctrines of grace. They found Calvinism. They found the truth and they're very proud about it. I can say this, if that lasts very long and there's not a, a contrasting journey into humility and not so much pride, they did, they got knowledge, they didn't get the truth of the sovereign grace Gospel. It hasn't affected their hearts right yet.

The church at Laodicea was, was, ah, carried the pride of their wealth into their Christianity, "Because you say I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing, you do not know that you're wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked." I guess one of the best illustrations is Judas Iscariot. Judas Iscariot was an enlightened man but he was a lost man. Judas Iscariot gave a good testimony of faith in Jesus. Judas Iscariot could teach others the things of Christ but he was a hypocrite. He was full of pride. He

was in it for what he could gain. The agenda was about himself. I call it the idol of unmet expectation. He joined up with Jesus for what he could get out of it if Jesus would build this kingdom and give him prominence in the kingdom, but the moment Jesus said, "No, I'm going to a cross. That's the way I build My kingdom." Jesus said, Judas said, "I'm out. I didn't get what I expected."

Brothers, we need to make sure those who join our church are those who the Lord has added because those whom the Lord has added are those whom the Lord has humbled and when you show them that you're building a biblical church, here's what they say, "I'll do the toilets. I'll sweep the floors. I just gotta get in on this." If you want to know if there's any goodness to this local church I pastor, it's that I have an army of Gospel humbled people. They do not care who gets the glory. They do not care who gets the credit. They just want to get in on God's work in God's church. Now this didn't happen overnight and we're still working on it, by the way, but we are at the place now and this is just the truth, that if someone rises up at Grace Life Church with a proud spirit and begins to be, cause trouble, it never gets to my desk because my men fix it before it gets there. I knew we had turned a corner when I came back from one of my July breaks and when I came back the Vice Chairman of the elders said, "Pastor, we dismissed two people from church membership while you were gone." I said, "Oh, my goodness. You did?" They said, "Yeah, we did." They said, "We didn't want you to have to fool with it." Well, some, when we tell guys about building a true church, they'll say, "Well, how long does it take?" And I'll say 20 years. You're gonna have to work hard for 20 years before you're gonna see the church functioning on track. Now I hope I'm wrong. I'll be the happiest man in the world if I'm wrong, but you better, you better have a long haul vision. There's a lot of peaks and valleys in the journey to get to a church to where at least you can say the strong majority of my church gives strong long-term evidence of being enlightened and truly saved. Job said in Job 42:6, "I retract and I repent in ashes." It was a heartfelt, humble possession of the truth.

Well, the enlightened and lost. The Bible has something to say about that and as pastors and church leaders, let's do our best without getting out of balance on the other extreme to make sure we add to God's church those whom he's truly added to his church.