



Message **Transcript** Built for Greatness

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Pastor Jeff:

Our Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise. Lord, even as we sing about your holiness this morning, we're reminded as to the fact of how great and awesome you are and how it's such a blessing to be able to be in your presence. And Lord, we thank you for your living and active Word, because we believe as a people that every time your Word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that you speak directly to us, that you have the power from heaven to talk directly to our hearts through your Son and by your Spirit. And so our prayer this morning is, Lord, speak to me. And so now for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord speak directly to you, who will believe what he tells you and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word, "Amen"?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Amen. In the heart of every born again believer there is a desire for greatness. The reason there's a desire for greatness is because from the moment that you repent of your sins and you believe that Jesus Christ died and paid for those, and you want him to be the Lord of your life and you place your faith and trust in him, the Holy Spirit comes in and dwells you. And when the Holy Spirit comes in on the inside and begins to do his work, there's something that goes off in your heart that says, "I want to be

great and I want to let the Lord use my life."

It's why when we read Scriptures like Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them," we say, "I want that. That's what I want." Or in John 14:12, when Jesus tells the disciples, "You'll be doing what I'm doing, you'll do even greater things than these because I'm going to the Father. Ask whatever you wish in my name, and it'll be done for you." We say, "I want in on that."

And then we read in John 15, the next chapter, how Jesus in the life of every believer, the ones that are connected to the vine, wants to produce fruit, more fruit and much fruit. And we say, "That's what I want."

And even when we read in Matthew's gospel in chapter 25 of the Parable of the Talents and how we're responsible to give an accounting for everything that God's invested in us and that God will multiply what he does in our life when we turn it all over to him, we say, "That's what I want." I'd love to be used by God like that. And yet what I find is for a majority of believers, a majority of people who have repented of their sins and placed their faith and trust in God, if they really looked at themselves in their heart, they would say, "I'm just not one of those great ones. I'm just not like the people I read about in church history. I'm not a pastor, I'm not a worship leader. I'm not somebody that's unique. I mean, I don't really see how God really wants to use me. I can see it in other people. Maybe there's a few choice people he could use, but how could God ever use me for greatness?"

And if that you here today, I believe God has a word for you because I believe God wants to use every born again believer for greatness, that he wants to build greatness in the life of every single person. It's why in your heart there's something that goes off like a tuning fork and says, "I want that. I'd love to be used of the Lord like that. Just tell me how." What today's message is, is that you're built for greatness and I want to give you five truths that are essential for you to be great for the Lord. Now, all five of these have to be in place and all five of these are internal, not external. The world will show you how you can have all these things and how you can go after all these things. But isn't it interesting that whether it's wealth or relationships or influence or health, even if you achieve all that, there's still an emptiness on the inside where Jesus would say, well, what does it profit you to gain the whole world and yet forfeit your soul? Or what can man give in exchange for his soul?

I mean, what God wants to do is create something on the inside for you to be great that not only is great in this life, but has a return of investment on the next life as well. And if you want to know how you can be great for the Lord, the Lord wants to tell you this morning. So I want to encourage you, open up your Bible to the Book of Nehemiah. We're going to start a new series today called Built to Last. How does God want to build the things in our life that stand the test of time? How can God build the things that really endure? And when we talk about the eternal God of the universe, what God wants to build are eternal things. If you've ever been like me where you've purchased something that you think is going to last and it doesn't last or you can't keep it together, it's like, "Ah, it was built wrong." God wants to build that which is lasting.

Now, just a little history of the Book of Nehemiah, it won't be much, but you need to be aware of what's going on. In Israel's history, there were 12 different tribes. Those tribes got divided up. It's called the divided kingdom at one point. 10 tribes went to the north. That was called Israel. Two tribes went to the south. That was called Judah. And so you have kings in the north and you have kings in the south. Here's what you can know about the northern kingdom. There were no good kings. There was not one good king. Every king did evil in the sight of God. And in 722 BC, the Assyrians came and wiped them out and took them into captivity.

On the southern kingdom, there were six to seven good kings depending upon how you count goodness. And with those kings, when things got really bad, God used those kings to turn the nation's heart towards him for a period of time. But in 586 BC the Babylonians came in and took them off into captivity. So when you read books like the Book of Daniel, they're writing from captivity back to Israel as to what's going on in their life. And here's why. Because God promised Israel he would make them a light to all the nations. And if they obeyed what he said, guess what would happen? He'd bless them so that everybody would look on and say, "Whoever their God is, he's God, I want to serve them." But God said, "If you're disobedient, I'll punish you so severely that people will look on and say, 'Whoever their God is, we don't want to mess with him,' because I'm going to get my glory either way. So if you do the right things, I'll bless you. If you do the wrong things, I'll curse you. And either way," God says, "I'm want to get all the glory."

And so what's happened now is Israel is in captivity and there were three

different pilgrimages back to Jerusalem to reestablish the nation. And without going into a whole Old Testament history, you may be familiar with a guy by the name of Zerubbabel or Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel came back in 458 BC. So 80 years after the southern kingdom has been taken away into captivity, Zerubbabel leads the church to come back and build the temple. Then about, let's see, I'm sorry, 48 years after they were taken into captivity, Zerubbabel brings them back. 80 years after that, Ezra the scribe, the teacher of the law came back and he was trying to teach spiritual morality to the people. And then about 14 years after that, in about 444 BC, Nehemiah is called of God to go back and rebuild the wall so that all of Jerusalem is set up.

Now, why do I tell you all this? Just get this one point. For over 140-plus years, Israel hasn't been doing what God's wanted them to do and God's been wanting to restore the nation, but they have to get their heart right for God to do what he wants to do. Can I just tell you this? If you want to be great, you have to align your heart with what God wants you to do in order to see it. And it's been a long period of time since Israel has been doing it right, and here's the point I'm trying to make. There's still hope for a nation that hasn't been doing it right for a long period of time when God's people will align their heart with God. That's what I want you to see, and that's what's going on in this book. So knowing that is a little bit of a background, I want to get into five truths of what God uses to build greatness in and through his people.

And the first is this, greatness is built when you conform your life to the purposes and passions of God. Greatness is built when you conform your life to the purposes

and the passions of God. Notice what the book says, Nehemiah 1:1, "The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month Chislev, in the 20th year, when I was in Susa the capitol, that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem." And here's they said to him. "The said to me, 'The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.'"

Nehemiah says, "When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven." So what does he learn? One of his brothers, Hanani, comes back with a group that had been in Judah and he's like, "Tell me what's going on in Judah." Now we're going to learn at the end of this chapter, Nehemiah was cupbearer to the king. So Nehemiah was the chief of staff for what's going on in Persia. He's a studied man, he's an influential man, he's good at what he does. The cupbearer not only took care of all of the king's things, the cupbearer would do his food tasting and wine tasting to make sure... If somebody was going to get poisoned, it was the cupbearer. He had massive responsibility. And when one of his brothers comes back with a team that had gone to Judah to see the southern kingdom and he starts inquiring and says, "What's going on there?" What do they tell him? "It's horrible. It's devastated. The wall has been burned down with fire. God's people are not protected, their reproach to all the other nations. Israel is not doing well."

And what does this man do? What does this man do? He can't even stand up when he gets the news. You ever heard such devastating news you can't even stand, it just knocks the wind out of you. He sits down and he weeps. This word is a sobbing. This grown man is sobbing and he mourns, which means he didn't have just a really good cry. It means that he was sobbing and even after he came to he was mourning. And we're going to see in chapter 2, for a period of four months... The month of Chislev is November, December timeframe, and in the month Nisan, when God begins to answer his prayer, for four months, he's weeping and mourning. What else is he doing? He's praying and fasting. Why is he doing that? Because he's conformed his heart to the purposes and passions of God, and that makes all the difference.

If you're going to be used for greatness, you have to conform your heart to the purposes and passions of God. Let me tell you what I mean. The way we're taught in our culture to be successful is to take personality tests and to figure out who you are, to figure out what you're good at, to figure out what you can do, and then it's your job to figure out how to deploy your gifts into a way that benefits you that you feel really, really good about. Now, there's nothing wrong with personality tests. God made everyone unique. I've taken probably more personality tests than anybody. They all come back relatively the same and tell me about me. But I could tell you for years I would take those things or take spiritual gift inventories and all this, but my construct was me. It wasn't God.

So I know I'm a pretty good communicator. I know I'm a pretty good leader. I know I like to build things from scratch. So what do I want to be with my life? Do I

want to be a coach? Do I want to be in business? What would be most beneficial to me? And how could some of the things that benefit me actually help others? And so even when I was in college, I spent all my time thinking about me and what I could do with my gifts and should I be in sales and what should I do? What should I do? What should I do? Everything began to change when I stopped praying about me and I asked God, "God, what do you want done in this world? God, what is it that thrills your heart? What are you about? What bothers you about what's going on in this world? And then God, because you created me and because you designed me and you gave me life and you started it on December 8th, 1970, actually months before, and you brought me into the world on that day and you're going to give me life that's already been designed for me. How can I best use that time with the gifting you've given me to honor you?" That's when everything changed.

Do you care about what God cares about? Many Christians don't. Many Christians see things in the world and when they see things in the world that fundamentally bother them, they hope and wish that somebody else would be bothered about that too so something could get done about it. Have you ever seen anything in this world as a Christian that you see in our world that fundamentally chafes you, that bothers you, that discourages you, that frustrates you, that angers you, where something comes up and says, "Something needs to be done about this." And then what do we tend to do? We tend to find other people to try to convince them that they need to do something about that.

Do you know why God's given you that holy frustration? Because that's what he

designed you to do. "You go do something about it. I deployed you with certain gifts and the reason you see things with such clarity and the reason that you're so focused on that and the reason that you know that needs to be done is because that's my heart in you." And so instead of looking around when you see what God cares about and you begin to pray this way, "Lord, show me what thrills your heart. Lord, let my heart be excited about what you get excited about. Lord, let my heart be discouraged about what you get discouraged about. Let my heart get angry about what you're angry about. Because Lord, I want my whole life to be consumed with what you want so that when the opportunity calls, I'm ready to do what you want me to do, when do you want me to do it, in the way in which you want it done."

That's the reason why many of us don't experience greatness in our life because we're too busy taking our God-given gifts that he's given to us and the God-given life that he's given to us, and we think we're the steward of that in the sense of, "I'll figure out what I need to do and what benefits me and my family and then I'll do some of those things." That's not why God put you on this earth. He put you on this earth to connect your calling to the Creator. Can I just tell you that? And I didn't start praying that way until I was in my 20s. I didn't even think about that. Matter of fact, when I was in college at the University of Illinois, if somebody said, "You're going to be a pastor," I would've cried. I don't want to do that. That's not where my heart is. That's not what I want to do. I got other things. But God, I'll help you out. I'll preach sometimes, I'll teach, I'll do Sunday school, I'll do something, but don't call me to that.

But it's interesting when you start to orient your life around the things of God and align your life and adjust your life so that you're ready, then when the opportunity arises, you figure it out. We live in a society that says this. We quote Confucius who says, "Choose a job you love and you'll never have to work a day in your life. Hey, young people, choose what you like and then you'll never have to work." Confucius said that. He's dead. He's in hell. You don't want to listen to him. It's not about choosing what you like and doing it. It's about aligning yourself with God who created you and purposed you and fashioned you with all your gifts, not for you but for him.

So how do you steward what he's given you for him so that when you meet him face to face, it's not a resume of, "Look what I did." It's, "God, to the best of my ability in the areas that you called me, I was faithful in doing the very thing you called me to do." That's what it looks like to be great. That's what it looks like to be great. Is your heart aligned with those things? Because when I see Nehemiah and he gets the word about the city, it's a reproach. It's a disaster. There's infighting. It's just not looking like the beautiful nation God designed it to be. Even though his job is secure and he's probably making good money and he's got influence and he's revered, what happens to him? He's sick. He's sits down, he's weeping, he's mourning, he's fasting, he's praying like, "God, do something. This bothers me. I don't care about my position. I care about you. I care about you. I care about what you want. What do you want done? Because here I am God and I'm willing to do whatever you want me to do." That's where greatness starts.

Greatness starts with understanding what God wants, what looks at. And the

more you get to know the Lord, the more you can look out on our world and you can say, "God hates that. God's disgusted by that. That bothers God. And guess what, that's now bothering me and I can't sit back and not do something about it anymore."

Just so you know, sometimes your greatest frustrations and greatest places of anger may be an area to which God is calling you to serve. I'll tell you my story. I went to church pretty much my whole life. I got saved when I was 18, but I was in the church long before I got saved. I didn't like church. I didn't like church before I got saved, and I definitely didn't like it after I got saved because nobody told me the gospel when I was in church. I got saved outside the church. I was not in the church. I was bothered in church because I didn't see that pastors had a heart for all God's people and they talk about the priesthood of believers, but they really didn't believe that everybody's uniquely gifted and they really didn't believe that if the church got it right that the world could change. And they really didn't believe that Jesus Christ needed to be central and they definitely didn't believe that the Word of God needed to be preached. And so I would go, I would check the box, I'd do the right thing, but I didn't like church until I started praying.

And you know it's pretty easy to play armchair Christian quarterback and talk about all the things you don't like about church? If you're not good at it, you just haven't spent much time at church. You can always find things that aren't right, but as God started stirring my heart, I realized I didn't hate the church. I realized I had a passion for doing the church in a way that aligned with the Word of God so that God's people

could be set on mission so that the church could be the glory of God and that the nation could change. And I repented and said, "Lord, I'll give the rest of my life to do that if you would let me." Why do I preach the Word? Because of that. Why do I pastor this church? Because of that. Why did we start a school? Because of that. Why are we expanding our media presence? Because of that. Because that's what the world needs is the unadulterated Word of God, speaking to people, believing that they can actually be the fullness of everything God created them to be. Amen.

So he prays. This will come up again next week. This is free of charge, but you need to see this. They've been waiting 140-plus years for the nation to get right. In Nehemiah 2:1 it says, "And it came about in the month Nisan." That's four months later. That means he's been weeping, mourning, fasting and praying for four months. That's when God answers him. And from the time God answers him after waiting 140 years, it took him 52 days to build the wall. Do you see what the point is here? When your heart's aligned with God and you're praying to God, four months of prayer is greater than 140 years of work. It means when a nation goes the wrong way for 140 years, God can turn it in 52 days. That's not too hard for him. Most people in the church don't believe that. I believe that. Pray, seek the face of the Lord. That's exactly what Nehemiah is doing. That's number one.

Number two is this, greatness is built when you celebrate your primary role as slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. Greatness is built when you celebrate your primary role as slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice how he prays. He says, "Lord, I beseech you." That means I beg you, O Lord God of what? Heaven. The great and awesome

God. That's the important, large, all-consuming God. He's awesome. We should reverence him. We should awe him. We should fear him who preserves the covenant and loving kindness. That means he always keeps his promises and that means he's always centered on unconditional love for those who love him and to keep his Commandments.

So how's he positioning himself? He's positioning God as God in him as a slave. It's why when you read Romans 1 and other epistles, Paul says, "Paul, a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ." See, here's the point. Because when you hear greatness and you're like, "Oh, I want to be great," here's what you begin to think as an American: "I want to be great. I want to have more influence. I want to be great. I want to be known. I want to be great. I want people to see who I am. I want to be great. I want to have more money. I want to be great. I want to have more health. I want to be great. I want people to know me. I want more fame." And that's why we're not being used for greatness.

You know what God's looking for? Anonymous saints. People that care more about his influence than they do about themselves. People that say, "He must increase, I must decrease," just like John the Baptist prayed. It's all for his glory. It's all for what he wants. It's all for what he... I don't care about me as long as he's glorified and you can't fake that. You can fake it for a while, but eventually the truth comes out as to who you really want to be great. Is it you or is it Christ in you, the hope of glory? Would you be comfortable if you were an anonymous saint on this side of heaven and nobody knew any of the good things that you did?

I mean, we read about Stephen for instance, in Acts chapter 7, I believe, and he preaches a phenomenal message that ties the whole Old Testament to Christ and when he does, the religious leaders of the day gnashed their teeth at him, take him outside, throw him over a wall, stone him to death until he's killed. And we're like, "Stephen, that was awesome." One sermon and he's killed and he gets codified by the Holy Spirit in our Bible. Do you know how many hundreds of thousands of people have had the exact same testimony that you'll never know their name until you get to heaven? See, we think, "Well, I'll do that as long as everybody knows that I did that." Some of the greatest saints are not known on this side of heaven. Are you comfortable with that? Are you comfortable with the fact that it's God that looks down and says, "It's for my glory"? That whether you're King Solomon and you have all the wealth and wisdom in the world, or whether you're Stephen and get martyred, not to us, not to us, but to God be the glory.

Are you comfortable with your position? Notice I didn't say servant because the Greek word, *doulos*, really means slave. Slave's even lower than servant. Slave is you're lucky to be here. If I feed you, I feed you. If I don't, I don't know. Now, the good thing about being a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ is he's a perfect, loving, incredible, awesome God. And even though we're slaves of his, he still loves us lavishly. And what better position can you have in this world than being a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ? There's not one. The problem is in church, we come in with our resumes, "Look what I can do for you. Look at my spiritual gifts. Look at what I can be." God can't use that, but what God can use is where do you need? This is how he's wired me. I want to

serve. I want to give my best to the Lord. Where can I be served as long as Jesus Christ is getting glory? What's that look like? God can use every single person that has that attitude.

God can make your life for his greatness if you're willing to do those two things as prerequisites. You're willing to partner your heart and conform your life to the purposes and passions of God and you'll celebrate your primary role as slave. Now, how does a slave think? A slave understands that they're thankful, they're grateful. I'm unworthy to even be in your presence. Thank you for making me a slave. I desire to please the Lord. I desire to live holy. I'm dependent for all things. You say, "Well, how do I know if I'm celebrating that role?" Here's the answer. Here's the answer. You ready? You say no. How's your prayer life? Your prayer life shows your dependence. A slave is dependent upon its master for everything. "I'm dependent upon you for food. I'm dependent upon you for finances. I'm dependent upon you for shelter. I'm dependent upon you for provision. I wouldn't have anything if it wasn't for you. And so I posture myself before you on a regular basis declaring my dependence upon you."

A lack of prayer indicates I don't need that role. God and I are good. I'll do my thing. He can do his thing. And if he wants to make me great, so be it. He's lucky to have me. Now, we don't say this, but sometimes I've heard people say stuff like this, "Pastor Jeff, wouldn't it be great if so-and-so got saved because if so-and-so got saved, can you imagine with their influence what could happen?" Yeah, I don't care. It's not like God's up in heaven saying, "Ah, if we don't get them saved, I don't know what

I'm going to do." And it's definitely not like he's saying, "Well, thank goodness you're saved because until 2024 when you were totally living from me, I was hamstrung. I couldn't get the job done. I'm so lucky to have you." God doesn't think like that. He doesn't need any of us, and yet he chooses to use us because he's invested his eternal life in us through his Son, and he's gifted all of us.

And when we posture ourselves as a slave and we're like, "Hey, I don't care, God, whatever you want... This is your life in me, where you want me to live and what you want me to do and how you want me to steward it and the way in which you want it done. As long as you are pleased with me, that's what I'm willing to do." When you begin to posture yourself that way, greatness begins to come out. And God's wired all of you uniquely. There's different passions and different giftings and different understandings as to how God wants to use your life.

There's nothing wrong with greatness, nothing wrong with it at all. Jesus taught his disciples on what greatness actually looks like on a couple of occasions, but in Matthew chapter 20, Matthew chapter 20, he was comparing the leadership of the Gentiles, the pagans of the day, to how his disciples should lead. And he said the Gentiles lord their leadership over people and great men exercise authority. He says this in Matthew 20:26. "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to become first among you shall be your slave. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

"Pastor Jeff, how do I get started with this greatness?" Find somebody to serve

and then place yourself under them and preference them over you. Want to make your marriage great? Preference your spouse more than you. Quit pointing out all the things that they don't do right and start pointing out all the things that they do and even where they don't do it "right", whatever that means, come underneath them and preference them and give them preference. Do it with your kids. Do it at your job.

Do you know God gives you myriads of opportunity to be a slave to somebody else if you're willing to take the job? It's everywhere. Hey, I just am here because I really feel the need to serve you and make your life better. You're not going to find too many people that say, "No, I'm not up for that." They're everywhere. The problem is too many of us, we want to be served. We want to be served. We want to be known. We want to be recognized. And that hinders God's work in and through us. God wants us to flip the paradigm because the one that we say that we serve, the Lord Jesus Christ, what did he do on his first trip to earth? He wasn't just a servant to everybody. He became a slave of all by dying on the cross for what purpose? For your sin. He laid it all down for you. Why don't we lay down our lives for him? Amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

So celebrate your primary role as slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. When internally that's how you function and that's how you think like, "I'm just a slave," you won't compare yourself to other people. You won't care who else is doing whatever else

they're doing because you're just comfortable in the fact that you're in the presence of the Lord and the Lord has called you to be used by him. Amen. You're built for greatness when you conform your life to the purposes and passions of God and you celebrate your primary role as slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me give you a third. Greatness is built when you confess and forsake the sins of others and how you have participated too. Greatness happens when you confess and forsake the sins of others and how you have participated too.

In verse 5, he beseeched the Lord, he begged the Lord, the great and awesome God who preserves his covenant, keeps his promise and his loving kindness to those who love and keep his commandments. Notice what he goes on to say in verse 6. "Let your ear now be attentive and your eyes be open to hear the prayer of your servant, which I'm praying before you now, day and night." So Lord, you know who you are and I know who I am. But Lord, if you hear me and if you'd see me and you'd listen to what I'm saying, I'm your servant. I'm your slave. Here's what I'd like to pray. I'd like to pray day and night.

Day and night does not mean I woke up in the morning, have my morning devotions, and at night I pray before I go to bed. Day and night is a metonymy in the Hebrew language that says at all times, all throughout the day and night, I'm just praying. This is my ongoing prayer and here's my prayer. "I'm praying on behalf of the sons of Israel, your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel, which we, that's me included, have sinned against you, I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted corruptly against you and have not kept the Commandments, nor the statutes,

nor the ordinances which you commanded your servant Moses." What is he doing? He's confessing sin. Of who? He's confessing the sin of the nation, but he's not just pointing fingers, is he? He's confessing the sins of the nation and he's saying, "Lord, I confess that that's wrong and here's how me and my family do the same things." And that's the part that we sometimes don't get right.

We're pretty quick to point out sin in the lives of others, specifically those outside the church. And God tells us that we should out loud confess, agree with the fact that these things in our culture are sinful and that they're wrong. We should do that. We should also confess or agree with the Lord in the ways that we participate in the very same things. Say, "Pastor Jeff, what are you talking about? We're Christians."

Let me ask you a question. Have any of you since the time that you've been born again, done something, acted a certain way, said something that has absolutely no reflection of the glory of Jesus Christ? How many have done it this week? It's quiet. It's really quiet in here. We all do. It's easy to stand up and say that's wrong and they're wrong and this, but what about those things that come out of your life when your flesh is no longer dead, but you've made it alive and you act in a way and you say a thing and you do a thing where you look at yourself and it's embarrassing because you're like, "That's not who I am. I'm a saint, but I didn't act like a saint. I acted like the pagan sinner I was before I got saved. What just happened?" Can we confess that to the Lord too, or do we say, "Well, thank God I'm forgiven"?

It's okay to point out things in our culture that are wrong and to confess the sins

of our culture. It's okay to confess the fact that our God created the universe. He created everything in it. He did it in six literal days, 6,000 years ago. And it's okay to confess the sin that many of the people in our world do not believe that and teach our kids falsely. It's okay to confess the sin that our world doesn't believe in the two genders that God created, male and female, and that they're both equal in value and that they both have distinct roles in the church and in the home. It's okay to confess the sin of the LGBTQ community that is living anti who God is and say that's wrong. It's okay, but we also have to confess the way we participated in it.

Lord, I confess to my own immorality in ways because your Word says that if I look lustfully upon a person that's not my spouse, I've committed adultery in my heart and I confess that. Lord, we confess as a church that while we're pointing out immorality in our streets, that we're steeped in pornography and all sorts of things in the church. And honestly we don't care. We confess that too. Lord, we confess that while these people are having homosexual and lesbian relationships and that's wrong, we confess we can't even get our marriage right because we're so into ourselves. And Lord, we confess the fact that when people are living wrong, that's one thing. But we also confess that in the church we're fornicating and shacking up and doing all the things that are an abomination to you and we don't even care.

I mean, if we're not going to confess our own sin, why are we pointing out everybody else's? We got enough to deal with.

1 Peter 4:17 says, "Judgment must begin at the house of God." And let me just tell you something. There's no non-Christian group that is keeping revival from coming.

It is Christians who are called by the name of God who refuse to confess and forsake their sin. It's me and you. We're the problem. And I knew I was going to get a little golf clap on that. I knew that because this is so convicting. You have to realize when you get to heaven, the reason revival didn't happen in your generation is because of you. God's willing to do it, but you have to confess and forsake sin. It's not a cavalier thing.

I grew up in an environment after I got saved where people would say things like this. I don't know if people still say things like this. I think they do. "Jesus Christ is my Savior. I just don't know that I'm willing to make him my Lord yet." Where in the world is that? "Kim is my wife. I'm just not willing to forsake all the other women out there for her." Are you kidding me right now? We're in covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other. Anything else is idolatry. If you've been a Christian, five seconds, confess and forsake your sin. That's why we don't see greatness. When we get to heaven, it's going to be an embarrassment for some of us who came to church on a regular basis, who told the Lord we wanted to see revival, who came to prayer meetings, who sat under preaching, but we had our own little pet sins that we said, "That's not a big deal. It doesn't affect anybody." Well, it's affecting God using his church for his glory and advancing the kingdom in the world.

Your sin is a bigger deal than a nonbeliever sin. Nonbelievers are supposed to sin. It's all they know how to do. You're a believer. You represent the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And if you don't confess and forsake your sin, it hinders the work of God in your life personally and in us as a church. I know it's convicting, but it's true. And I love you enough to tell you that because in our generation, I'd love to see the

Lord. I'd love to see the Lord do a work that we would marvel at. I'd love to see the Lord do a work that for 140-plus years generations of church have been praying for that we get to watch in a couple months because the church said, we're sick of our sin and we want you Lord.

But Pastor Jeff, aren't we forgiven when we trust Christ? Yeah, you're forgiven, but you haven't stopped sinning yet. And so God gives you ample opportunity to look into your life and say, "Lord, I'm so thankful I'm a saint and I'm so thankful I'm forgiven. But Lord, I don't want to stay where I'm at and I want to continue to grow in holiness and I want the full measure of everything you have. So Lord, I'm willing to confess anything." And if we don't do that, all we're doing is spinning words.

It's okay to pray about our government. It's okay to pray against the lies that you hear when somebody says this and does the exact opposite of what they say. It's also okay to say, "Lord, I also confess at times, I've used my tongue in a way where I've used my tongue to my advantage, where I haven't said the whole truth or where I've slandered somebody's character or behind their back or gossiped about them. Lord, I confess my own tongue too."

It's okay to point out others if you're willing to point it out yourself. Or what about this one, this big one we talk about in church, what about abortion? Can we talk about abortion for a second? I want to talk about it and I'm framing it right here. Hear me as your pastor. It's wrong every time because it's murder, because God created life. Now, let me just say this before you get up and walk out. There's forgiveness in the

blood of Jesus Christ for every single sin. And I know I'm talking to hundreds of you that have had an abortion, and I want you to know the grace of God is greater than your sin if you want it. And I'm not just talking to the women because despite popular belief, it takes a man to get a woman pregnant. And I know there's several men here that look back over their past and say, "I paid for this or I had this done and I'm feeling the guilt." There's forgiveness for you too.

So let's hold the standard high, but let's also hold the grace of God high that there's massive forgiveness and let's hold the standard high, which says that all abortion's wrong and that you're killing an innocent life and you can't have a nation that slaughters kids and ask God to bless your nation. It won't work. And we can confess the sins of our government that promote this and we can confess the sins of our government that don't care. But we also need to confess our own sins that at times we don't want to get involved because we don't want somebody to hate us.

And we can confess the sins of us that will say, well, we just want to preach the gospel. We don't want to get involved in these "social issues." They're not social issues, they're biblical issues. And if you're not involved, you're passive and you're not living out the mandate of the gospel. So confess your own apathy and confess your own lethargy and confess the fact that, Lord, we don't want people to have them. But then when people are pregnant out of wedlock or they're having to make tough decisions to bring that baby in the world, we don't really care about how they're going to survive or what they're going to do. And I don't want to get involved in that because then that would be a burden. We don't care. Lord, we don't care about what you care

about. We really don't care about the life that we say we care about.

Do you see why we have to confess our own sin too? Instead of pointing fingers, we got to start pointing thumbs because God can redeem his church. That way we can still hold the standard high and then we can preach the love and grace of God. That's what it looks like. Greatness is not afraid of holding God's standard of holiness high. Greatness is also not afraid of saying, "I'm not measuring up to the standard, and I praise God that he's going to help me."

Let me read you a passage. This is usually one that people get up and walk out on. So just hang for a couple verses. I mean, just listen to this. 1 Corinthians 6:9 says, "Or do you not know, are you not aware of this church? That the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived." Let me say it again. The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. Do not be deceived. "But I think they went to a camp and prayed a prayer." The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. Do not be deceived.

Here's who doesn't get in. Neither fornicators. Those are people that are shacking up outside of marriage coming together to save money on their bills. No fornicators, no idolaters. Anybody puts some other god or idea ahead of Jesus Christ. Nor adulterers, people that are engaged in relationship outside their marriage, either in thought, mind or deed, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the coveters, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. You will not inherit the kingdom if that's you. That's the Word of God. I'm not making this stuff up. "But pastor, I thought that if Jesus died, I could live that way." No, Jesus died so you

wouldn't have to live in your sin anymore.

And notice what he says. Listen, listen, listen. No, not yet. "Such were some of you." If you're a Christian here, your name is listed in that list. And that's not an exhaustive list by the way either. That's just a few sins. There's way more. "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

The gospel is not about good people becoming better or bad people becoming good. It's about people that were dead with no hope that had been made alive in Christ. And if you've been made alive in Christ, continue seeking the things of Christ. Confess the sins of others, yeah, confess the sins of our culture, yeah, but then point thumbs where you participated in it and ask God to redeem you from it. I'm tired of going to church conference after church conference where we call all the men forward. You need to pray about their porn addiction. Like stop.

If you love that more than you love Jesus, at least admit it and quit playing games because your bad behavior is hindering the revival work of God in our generation. And he loves you enough. He cares for you enough that he can wash it clean and what you once were, you don't have to remain in. It's true of porn, it's true of alcoholism, immorality, filth language, everything. But if all you're going to say is, "Well, that's just the way God made me," we'll never see the fullness of his grace realized in our generation. So repent.

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if

we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Proverbs 28:13 says it this way, "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper." Keep your sin a secret, you'll never be a God-honoring Christian. Just keep a secret. It's like trying to hold a beach ball underwater. It won't work. It's going to come up eventually because God will sooner will find you out. But he who confesses, that means I agree with God it's a sin and I'm forsaking it. For those, they'll find compassion.

Oswald Chambers said in his devotional *My Utmost for His Highest*, I don't know what day it was, but he said this: "God will tax the remotest star for those who repent of their sin and are willing to walk in his way." It means God will do whatever for the person that says, "That's me. I'm a sinner. That's me. I'm a Christian. I should be living... That's me, God, and I'm tired of that." Compassion upon compassion, upon compassion upon compassion. Repentance and compassion go together like a hand in a glove. The problem is we've taught people the only time you need to repent is when you come to Christ, and once you've done that, you're good. Well, you're good if you never sin again. But that hasn't been my case, nor has it been the case of anybody else in the history of the church.

I mean, just look at the person next to you. I know it's really uncomfortable right now because you're all feeling conviction, but just look at the person next you. Just look at them. Let me tell you about that person. They're really good at sinning. They're really good at it. Some of you looked at their family, you're nodding your heads, "Yeah, I know. I know." My family's nodding at me. We're good at it. That's why we need to

forsake it. The beauty of the cross is you don't have to stay in it. You don't have to go fix it. You don't have to go work on it because if you could work on it and fix it, then Jesus Christ died for nothing. Oh, come to the cross again, amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Greatness is built when you confess and forsake the sins of others and how you too, have participated.

Number four is this, greatness is built when you call on God to honor his promises. Greatness is built when you call on God to honor his promises.

Once he's confessed his sin, listen to verses 8 through 10. He says, "Remember the word which you commanded your servant, Moses." Do you think God needs to be reminded to remember his word or do you think he knows it? I mean when he says, remember your word, he's like, "God, I'm going back to your word. This is true. I'm just going to hold you to it because you said it and I believe it, and you said you do all these things."

And notice what he says first. "You said this to Moses, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples.' Remember that? You said that God, and then we've been unfaithful and you scattered us. You've been so true to that. But you also said God in verse 9, 'If you return to me and keep my Commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the remote part of the heavens, I will

gather them from there and bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause my name to dwell.' Remember that one too. Lord, you punished us because we didn't do what you wanted us to do, but also remember the fullness of your word. You told us if we return to you, that you'd give us grace and you'd bring us all back together.

Remember that God." And then he said why. "Because these people, they're your servants. They're your people who you redeemed by your great power and your strong hand."

Lord, I'm not asking this for us. I'm asking because we represent you. If you're a Christian, you represent Christ, you belong to Christ, you are of Christ. So Lord, remember that I belong to you and I want to do the things that make you look good. So Lord, I want to hold you to your Word. You ever hold God to his Word? Because see, when you're walking in fellowship with the Lord and you're confessing and forsaking sin, God hears you. So Lord, I'm walking in fellowship with you. So Lord, I'm asking you to provide for me. You said you'd always provide, I'm asking you to build your church. You said you'd build your church. I'm asking for you to bless my family. You said you would do those things. I mean everything God says in his Word, he'll do if you're walking in right relationship with him. You said you'd provide for my needs. You said you'd forgive my sins. You said you'd make me holy. You said you'd hear my prayers. Lord, I want that from you.

And think about who we're asking. Have you ever thought about who our God is? I mean, who's your God? We're talking about the one that created the whole universe

out of nothing in six literal days. We're talking about the one who sent his Son, the second person of the Trinity who always existed to take the form of a man, who fulfilled the law, who died on the cross, who rose from the dead, who ascended into heaven, who offered life to all who would call upon his name. And when you repent and believe, then he deposits the Holy Spirit in your life so that you can walk with God every day of your life and your eternity is completely secure with life and blessing and hope. How awesome is our God?

And yet we asked such small things. I quoted you a quote that I heard from a friend. "How could we ask such small things from a God who can do all things?" And I've been thinking about that and thinking about that, and I'm like, think about this. With as vast as God is, what could you ask God that's an actual big request? What would a big request be? I mean, if God receives your prayer, there's no way he's going to be like, "Whoa, that's a big one." I mean, he built the world out of nothing. He holds all the stars in place. What could you ask that's big? Every prayer you ask is small. You say, "How do you know that?" Well, I know that because when Jesus was doing his healing and deliverance ministry, there was one time his disciples could not deliver a boy from a demon that Jesus said, "Bring the boy to me," and Jesus healed him on the spot. And later in the afternoon, the disciple said, "Why couldn't we do that?" He said, "Because of the lack of your faith."

If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, now this is mustard seed faith, smallest of all the seeds. If you have the faith the size of a mustard seed, you can ask this mountain to uproot itself and go throw itself in the sea and it'll be done for you just

as you ask. You know what that tells me? I don't know of anybody in the church that has mustard seed faith because we would think that's a big deal. If Pikes Peak and Longs Peak ended up one in the Atlantic and one in the Pacific, we would say, "That's huge." And God's like, "That's not a big deal. That's a small one." So what could you ask that's too big?

We don't see God move because we ask such small prayers. "God heal my toe." Now, if you ever broke your toe, I have, that's a significant prayer because you don't realize how valuable your fourth toe on your left foot is until you can't use it and how much weight you're... Those are important prayers. But God's like, "Yeah, I can do that, but I can do so much more. Would you please ask me for something great?"

I'm just going to let you in a little secret. Now, I'm telling you this because Jeremiah 33:3 has just been in my heart for a long time this week. "Call to me and I'll answer you and tell you great and mighty things you do not know." I have knowledge that's inaccessible to anybody else, but I'm willing to share it with you if you'll come to me and I can do more than you ask or imagine. With my God all things are possible. And because I know that, I pray big prayers. We're starting a high school this year by the grace of God, amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

But I already know the kind of high school that God's put on my heart, we don't

have space for it. We don't. We don't have money for it. We don't. I mean, we have enough money to get it started, we got space to get it, but we don't have what I see in my mind and in my heart that God wants to do a covenant Christian high school, that everybody's coming in from all over the city. We don't have the space. So I pray, Lord, it would be so incredible if the city of Denver would bow their knee to you. And when they do, they'd be so thankful to a church that preaches the gospel that they would just give us Wellshire Golf Course free of charge so we could put a Christian covenant high school across the street.

Now, let me ask you this. That'd be a big thing, right? Let me ask you another.

Would that be a big thing for God?

Congregation:

No.

Pastor Jeff:

No. He's like, "I can do that without sweating." So why not ask? We have not because we asked not. Well, why not ask? I mean, what would happen if there were hundreds or thousands of brave congregations across the country with everybody that believed like you, that was living for Jesus? Could we not change our nation to trust in Jesus?

Friends, the hope of our nation is not our next President. The hope in our nation is the church of Jesus Christ. It is. It is. So ask, hold God to his Word. "God, you said you were going to do... God, you said you wanted to do... God, you said you could do

far more than we could ask or think. I can ask or think a lot. You said you do far more abundantly than that. So I'm going to ask you to do far more abundantly than that. I'm going to hold you to your Word." But these first four have to be in place in order for God to do it. So he's asking God to do great things. He's asking him to make his name great because we're your servants and you're our king.

Let me give you a fifth one. Greatness is also built when you cultivate a life of excellence that glorifies the Lord now. When you cultivate a life of excellence that glorifies the Lord now, now notice this. Again, "O Lord, I beseech you. I'm begging you. May your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant. Remember, I'm just your slave God and the prayer of all your servants because all of us are praying who delight to do this. Revere your name. We want to make you look great and make your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man." That's the king. He says, "Now, I was cupbearer to the king." And the cupbearer was the chief of staff. The cupbearer had to be a man that was well-educated, that was well-skilled, that was administrative, that was a leader that could organize, that could move people.

So what do you see in Nehemiah? Nehemiah is already using his position to be excellent for the Lord. When they got carried off into captivity, Nehemiah was like, "Oh, well, guess God doesn't care about us." No, he's living a life of excellence before he hears the call of God to go back to Jerusalem. And here's where many of us miss it as Christians. We think once God calls me and shows me what my life's about, then I'll live excellent. Once God shows me who my spouse is going to be, I'll stop going to the bars, getting drunk and sleeping around. Once God shows me what my career path's

going to be, then I'll stop being lazy in school and I'll start studying. Once God shows me this, then I'll do that. That's not faith and it doesn't work. Live and cultivate a life of excellence now.

I mean, think about all the heroes in the Bible like, oh, David, he slayed Goliath. He was awesome. What was he doing before he slayed Goliath? You know what his curriculum was? Shepherd. Now, if you want to kill a valiant warrior, normally you don't go in the shepherd fields to find the warrior to slay them. But what was God doing? God was building his curriculum. By the time David gets here, he is like, "I slayed the bear. I slayed the lion. This isn't going to be hard for me. God's been preparing me all along because I've been living excellent for him."

What did the apostle Paul do before he was converted? He spent his whole life studying the Hebrew scriptures. He was so versed in them, he said, "Of all of the people, I'm obeying them fully. I was a zealot of all the zealots. I was a Pharisee of all the Pharisee." Why did God call him? Because that converted Paul, what was he able to do? He was able to be used of the Holy Spirit to write two thirds of the New Testament. Why? Because before he was a believer he was living a life of excellence.

What was Peter before he was converted? He was a loudmouth leader. What was he after? He was converted? A redeemed loudmouth leader. I mean, God's not going to change your personality. You're going to be who you are, but God has a way of your curriculum and taking you through things to do things that only you can do.

God chose your parents. God chose your school. God chose your teachers. God

chose your coaches. All the good, the bad, and the ugly is part of your curriculum that God has used to bring you together for your next step. Even the things that you don't like. The good things that have happened, God's using them. Many times it's the things that we think are the bad things that God uses even more. I wouldn't have picked this. I wouldn't have wanted to go through that divorce. I wish I would've known better when I was in college. I wish I wouldn't have... God's using all that for his glory. He's like, "Hey, if you come to me, I got you. I got you. I'll use every broken piece that's been there for your glory."

Man. Think about it. People are like, "Do you come from a line of pastors?" I'm like, "No." But I have a dad who's a veterinarian who's probably more of a pastor than any guy I've ever met. Probably the nicest guy in the world who when an animal would die, and I'm a kid, I'm like, "Dad, let's go home and play catch." He's like, "No, I got to be here." I'm like, "Dad, the animal is dead. Let's go." My compassion came out and my dad would say something like this. He would like, "Jeff, I'm not here for the animal." He's like, "This family lost a family member and they're hurting. I need to be here with them." And I watched my dad do that over and over and over. Even my good friends that are super tough, who have lost a dog, who have sat in my dad's office and bawled, they'll be like, "Your dad is the best." I'm like, "I've never even seen you cry." It's like, "I've only cried twice in my life; when I lost my dad and I lost my dog. And your dad was awesome."

Why did God give my dad to me? So I'd learn the heart of a shepherd. Or my mom, who's the biggest go-getter who told me I could be whatever I want and do

whatever I want, who's entrepreneurial? Where did I learn all that? It was my mom. What about coaches that were there for me, coaches that were good, coaches that were... It's all part of the curriculum. You can't pick. God's picking it for you. It's all coming together. He's doing it all. You don't need to look at somebody else's because God's doing it in you. And if you'll just embrace it and say, "I want to live a life of excellence for the Lord now." Because what happens is this. Just think about this. See, if you haven't heard quotes like this, I do as a pastor all the time.

I've heard business owners say this, "I don't like to hire Christians." Like why? "Because as a general rule, they're some of the laziest entitled people you could ever hire and they expect to break." That's a shame, isn't it? That's not true of all Christians, but I've heard business owners tell me that. I've heard people say on athletic teams, "Yeah, I don't want to go to the Bible study with this guy." I'm like, why? "Because he's the laziest guy on the team and doesn't work hard." Okay. "I don't want to go to church. The reason I don't want to go to church is because I don't want to be anything like that family. They go to church and act like that but during the week to act like that."

Live a life of excellence now that glorifies the Lord. Whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you cultivate a life of excellence, then when the time comes for whatever God has for you, you'll live that excellence too.

Here's the beauty of this. I know this is convicting. I mean, I know it's convicting. Do you realize when I preach this, I preach to myself first? I'm telling you, I know it's convicting. But what would happen... God doesn't ask us to be perfect. His Son's perfect. When he says, "Be perfect therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect,"

that's only possible through the shed blood of Jesus. It's not possible by us working on it. It's not possible by us getting things right. But in your life, instead of just heading for the door and saying, "Oh, it was a good message. I got some things to work on." You have nothing to work on because if you could have worked on it, you would've worked on it by now.

But what about those things that would say, "I've been thinking about me and I haven't been thinking about God and I've been concerned about my influence rather than what God can do through me. I haven't been seeking his face and I haven't really wanted what he's wanted. I haven't really confessed or forsaken sin and I'm living with my pet sins and I'm not living a life of excellence. And today that's going to stop because I'm repenting. I'm going to let Jesus be my foundation because I know he'll never fail me."

And here's the lie you're going to hear from now until the time you get into your car. And if you ever come back to Brave, you're going to hear it. "If you give Jesus everything, he's going to take away all your fun. He's going to rob you of all your joy." Lie. If you're living completely for Jesus, there's joy you don't even know about. There's hope you don't know about. There's provision you don't know about. There's joy you don't know about. There's life you don't even know about. He's a good God. And he created you so you'd be in relationship with him. I don't care who you are.

If you've wandered off and you say, "I'm the furthest person in this building from God," God can use your life for greatness if you'll repent of your sin and trust Jesus

Christ. And if you continue to confess and forsake sin, hold God to his promises, he's going to do great things in and through you. And what would it look like as a church with us living for God? And when we see him do great things, we know it's not us. We're just redeemed. He forgave us. That's why he's doing great things. We just want him. That's all it is. We're just dead people that want to tell you how to be alive. That's it. And what would it be like in our generation if we watch God wash across our city, nation, and world with the gospel of Jesus Christ and bring people to himself? You can have an opportunity to be a part of that and so can I if we wanted.

Would you stand with me? Our Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. Lord, I know today was an extra long message, but I think it was also a extra timely message because we needed to hear this today. Lord, do a work in our heart right now.

If you've not trusted in Jesus, would you just right where you are just say, "Lord, I repent. I know I'm not yours and I need to make my life right. Come into my life, Lord Jesus."

And if Jesus is the Lord of your life, why not tell him, "Lord, you put your finger on something today you don't have control of, and I confess it to you right now. I repent." We'll have some of our elders and prayer team up front during the singing of this song. If you want to come pray with somebody, if you want to do it by yourself, totally cool. You want to write a prayer request, totally great. But Lord, would you remind us that you will never fail us and that you want to build us for greatness? We give you all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise in Jesus' name, amen and amen. Can we praise

the Lord this morning?