



Message Transcript

Godly Choices to Endure

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We've been talking in the book of Hebrews about God's plan for us, of being faithful all the way to the finish line. And as we took a look in chapter 11, we saw all the great men and women of faith, the heroes of the faith, and endured all the way to the end. And as we opened up chapter 12, God began to show us how we're called to throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and to run with endurance the race that is marked out for us. And then last week, we took a look at the fact that God loves all of his children so much that He disciplines us, that He course corrects us, that He rebukes us, that He keeps us in line because God's desire for us is not just for us to experience Him here, but to make it all the way through the finish line in glory.

And just like any good runner, it's not how you start, it's how you finish. And like any good parent, God not only wants to talk about His corrective nature, and His discipline, and His rebuke, and His reprove, and His correction, God wants to tell you, as His child, "Hey, if you don't want to endure my discipline, there's some choices that you can make going forward." There's some good choices that you can make. And so, as chapter 12 continues, He highlights five good choices for you to make as a believer in Christ that will help ensure the fact that you will not only make it to the finish line, but you'll make it all the way through the finish line.

And if you love the Lord, Jesus Christ, there's some choices that you can make. Just like when you're running a race, there's some choices that you can make. You can choose the type of footwear that you're going to wear, you can choose to hydrate yourself well, you can choose to carload the night before you go running, and then you

can continually choose to put one foot in front of the other, in front of the other, in front of the other, until you make it.

And so, the author of Hebrews is writing this group of converted Jews who have thought, maybe it's better to go back to the old way, maybe it's better to just be religious, maybe it's better to just practice some religion than to continue on with Jesus, because it's really hard to endure with Him. All of you who are believers know that anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. If you're going to live with Jesus to the full, there are some challenges that are going to come into your life and there's a tendency to want to turn back.

And so, the author of Hebrews is saying, "You don't need to turn back. Make these choices. These are good choices for you and if you make these choices going forward, God will bring you all the way through." So, as you open up your Bible today, open up to Hebrews chapter 12, we're going to begin in verse 14 and read through the end of the chapter. I like to give way to the public proclamation of God's word. So, I'd like to read this and then we will unpack together those five choices that we can make. Hebrews 12, begin in verse 14, He says this, "Pursue peace with all men and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, and that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled, that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

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 it with tears. For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched into a blazing fire, into darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words, which sound was such that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, 'If even a beast touches the mountain, it'll be stoned.' And so terrible was the sight that Moses said, 'I am full of fear and trembling.' But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

See to it that you did not refuse Him who was speaking. For if those who did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying. 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.' This expression, 'Yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

And here in that text, as we read that lengthy piece of text, this writer is writing to his Jewish converts, his friends, and he's encouraging them, don't give up, just keep

running the race, you can do this, and God's going to be with you and He'll help course-correct. And if you run off the path, He's going to bring you back in the path, because that's what our God does. But there's choices that you can make that will partner with what the Lord's desires are for your life. That will ensure that you're going to make it all the way through the finish line.

And He highlights five in this text, and I want to go through them this morning. And the first is this, godly choices for you to endure, the first one is this, pursue peace and holiness. Pursue peace and holiness. Notice what He says in verse 14, "Pursue peace with all men and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." Pursue peace and holiness. We're really talking about pursuing peace with men and pursuing holiness with God. So, start talking about pursuing peace with all men. What does it mean to pursue peace with all men?

It means that we're going to live in such a way that as long as it's up to us, there's going to be peace in our earthly relationships. We know from God's word that if we're to sum up the whole law, we're to love the Lord, our God, with all our heart, soul, and mind, and strength, and we're to love our neighbor as ourself. That we know that what God's desire for us is to honor Him and preference others. That sums it all up. Right? And what He's telling us to do here is if you want to make a good choice, if you want to make choices that will ensure you're making it all the way to the end, pursue peace with other people. Now think about what Paul says to us in Romans chapter 12 verse 18, as he writes to the Romans about what it looks like to have peace.

He says, "If possible..." Sometimes it's not possible, "If possible, so far as it depends upon you, be at peace with all men." When he writes to the Ephesian church, in Ephesians chapter four, in verse three, he says it like this, "Being diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." Hey, peace, peace in all your relationships. As far as it's possible with you, have peace in all your relationships. Now, I know what some of you're thinking, "There's somebody I'm thinking of... it's impossible to have a relationship with him. There's no way we could ever have peace." No, it doesn't say you have to have peace in all your relationships. It says, "As far as it is up to you, have peace with all people." You can extend peace. Think about how the Father extended peace to us.

God was angry with sinners all the time. God's holiness, righteousness, and truth, were never going to be lowered. There was no way for human beings to get to Him, so God sent his son to be the savior of the world. And when Jesus hung on the cross and took all of the sin of humanity upon Him, He was making peace. Romans 5:1 says that we have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ. We have been justified by faith. It's through Jesus who broke down the wall of hostility. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While we were not offering peace to God, God was offering peace to us.

Guess what God is still doing throughout the universe for people here and everywhere else who have never responded to His love through repentance and faith, here's His message, "I love you enough that even though I'm perfect, and even though

I'm holy, and even though I'm righteous, and even though I'm good, and even though I cannot tolerate sin, I loved you so much that I sent my Son who fulfilled the law, who took all my wrath, who was buried in a grave, that said, 'It is finished. It's done.'" And He rose from the dead to show that He was the eternal Son of God, and He began to offer life to all people. And you, no matter who you are or wherever you are, through repentance and faith, you can turn to God. Why? Because He's offering peace.

Amen.

He's offering peace. You're not offering peace, God is. And guess what? Even for those who will never accept His peace, even for those who are hostile, God is still offering peace. So, what's He telling us to do? He's telling us to live the gospel. Because I'm offering peace to all people, you offer peace to all people too. Now sometimes, peace cannot be established because the other person's combative, they're belligerent, warlike, hostile, no matter what you do, they're going to be mad at you. But God doesn't say make peace with all people. He says, "As long as it's up to you," meaning, I'm extending peace, I'm willing to make peace, I'm willing to say I was wrong, I'm willing to forgive, I'm willing to establish a road that, if you were repentant, if you were willing, we could be in relationship.

It doesn't mean there aren't times to set healthy boundaries when people are abusive, and mean, and cruel. I understand that. But in our hearts, God is saying, "Do not harden your heart towards people because I don't harden my heart towards people. I don't take any delight in the death of the wicked." Which means this, because it's really easy on the Sunday morning to say, "Yeah, I got that one going to number

two."

But God's saying, "Think about that person that just came to your mind." It's not necessarily a myriad of people, it's that one person where you brush them aside while you're listening to the message, "I know He is not talking about them, but everybody else, I'm pretty good with." No, the Holy Spirit's saying, them. You live in such a way, not necessarily, so they know it, but so that if you appeared in heaven today, that you could say in all authenticity before God, "So long as it was up to me, I made every effort to have peace with that person." They may chose not to have peace with me, but I did everything I could to demonstrate what the gospel looked like because of what you'd done for me. You say, "Well, how am I going to do that?" Well, in order to be that way with others, you got to grow in your holiness.

He says, "Pursue peace and holiness." Pursue peace with others and holiness with God. He said, "And the sanctification," that's holiness. That's being set apart without which no one will see the Lord. Now, when we talk about holiness, we're talking about God's character, we're talking about who He is. That He's unlike us, He's different than us. He's righteous. He's perfect. He's untouchable. He's set apart. But here's what the gospel tells us, at the moment that we trust Jesus, positionally, guess what we are? We're immediately called holy as well. Positionally, that's who God tells us that we are. And as believers in Christ, knowing we're going to be with Christ one day in glorification, we're going to experience holiness with Christ. Now in the meantime, here's where we're at today, we're declared holy, but we look in the mirror and we're not always acting holy. And so, there's a pursuit of holiness.

There's a pursuit of my identity of who God is telling me that I already am. God tells me that I'm holy, but there's areas in my life that aren't reflecting his holiness. And so, I'm asking God, "Grow me in the areas where I'm not like you just yet." And the good news this morning is, no matter who you are, there's some areas that you're not like God just yet. There's always room for growth. Isn't there? And you say, "Well, how am I going to pursue peace with others?" Well, God's got to grow you in His holiness. God has to grow you in His likeness. As God grows you in His likeness. You'll love other people the way God loves. As you love other people the way God loves, He's going to shape you and grow you in holiness. They go hand in glove. As you honor God and pursue Him, and as you preference other people and pursue peace with others, that's what God does.

And forgiveness, can I just tell you, is essential. Forgiveness is essential. Christian, listen to me, listen, listen, listen. The Christian faith is entirely centered on the forgiveness of Jesus Christ by laying down His life on a cross. The only reason anybody is ever a Christian is because Jesus Christ forgave us by saying, "Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing." If you believe that, then as a Christian, you cannot hold unforgiveness against somebody else. If your whole eternity is staked on the fact that you've been forgiven by something greater than someone else has ever done to you because you've rebelled against God, you cannot live in unforgiveness. Unforgiveness doesn't mean you feel like it. Unforgiveness means, I'm done being unforgiving. Holding on to unforgiveness, as I've said many times, is like

drinking poison and hoping the other person dies.

It doesn't work. It just makes you miserable. Because God loved you when you were unlovable, you're going to extend peace to people that are unlovable. As you do, you're going to grow in holiness. As you do, you're going to pursue the Lord, saying, "You got to change me because they're so unlovable." And God will be like, "I know exactly what that looks like because I pursued you." And God grows us in holiness and peace as we do these things and put them into practice. It's like David said in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, take not your holy spirit from me."

Lord, I want to grow in holiness. Psalm 139 verses 23 and 24 says, as David prays, "Search me, oh God, and know my anxious heart. See if there's any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Growing in holiness is not me trying, on my own, to get to be like God, it's me coming before God and telling God, "God, show me the areas where I'm not... I know they're myriad, show me the area in my life you want to change. I know they're big, but Lord, I'm going to trust you to change who I am because I want to reflect your glory on this side of heaven."

Amen.

You've already been declared holy, you're going to experience holiness, but here on this earth, it's difficult to walk out. We have the expectation of every other Christian in the church to live out their holiness all the time, just don't expect me to. In Hebrews chapter 10, verse 14, we read this already, He says, "For by one offering, He has

perfected for all those who are being sanctified." So, by one offering, Jesus Christ made everybody holy, and then we're growing in that holiness until we see Him face to face. Make the choice, while you're walking with God, to pursue peace with all people.

When you're pursuing peace, it doesn't mean when they treat you wrong, you respond in kind, it means you give them peace. Perhaps you've been driving down the road like I have, when you've accidentally cut somebody off in traffic. And there's a gesture that non-Christians make, two Christians, which indicates I'm upset with you. And as Christians, we're called not to return that gesture in kind. So usually, if I've done that, which has happened on more than one occasion, I'm in the stoplight, that person's coming up and they've given me that signal, and I can see that they're saying things about me which are not pleasant, I'll look to them and say something like this, "It was my fault. I'm sorry." I'm trying to live at peace with them, not escalate it. You say, "Well, how am I going to get that opportunity? When's that going to happen?" Keep breathing.

You will have opportunities in life to escalate things or bring them down every single day. Right? So, when you have that opportunity... some of you have it in your marriage. It's a marriage opportunity. Some of you have it in your dating relationship. Some of you have it at work. Some of you have it with your comrades, your buddies, your neighbors. You're going to have opportunities to either accelerate something or bring peace to something. As far as it's possible with you, live at peace with everybody. Peace. That's what you want to be known for. That's what you want to be able to tell God when you get to heaven, that you did everything you did to be known

for your peace, and that God grew you in holiness. Pursue peace and holiness.

Number two is this, a choice that you can make to continue to endure is desire the fullness of grace in others. Desire the fullness of grace in others. It means if you've really received the grace of Christ in your life, you should have a hunger and desire to see that fulfilled in others. You should want God to touch other people in the way that He's touched you. Notice what He says. He says, "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble and by it many be defiled." See to it no one comes short of the grace of God. What does it mean to come short of the grace of God? Coming short of the grace of God means you know all the truth, you know all the realities, you're aware of what the gospel is, you know that Jesus Christ died in the cross, you know that He rose from the dead.

You may even go to church, you may even be in a small group, you may have served on a church staff, you may be all these things, but you've come short of the grace of God because there's never been a time in your life where you repented and invited Jesus Christ to be the Lord of your life and save you. Don't come short of that, and desire that other people wouldn't come short of that. As a pastor, I can tell you, I love you. I don't get to know every single one of you, I don't get to know all your wonderful faces, I don't get to know all of your stories, but my desire is, if you're hearing the teaching of the Lord, that you go to BRAVE and that you don't come to a place where you say, "I like the teaching, I like the worship, I like the church, I like the groups," but you've never responded to Jesus.

Don't come short of the grace of God. Go all in with Jesus. Not 90%. Like, "I'm

kind of there, but I don't know if I'm willing to let him take over my whole life." No, let him take over your whole life. "Well, when?" "Right now." Don't wait another second. Don't come short of the grace of God. Desire that no one would come short of the grace of God. And that no root of bitterness would spring up, not only in your own heart, but in somebody that's come short of the grace of God. Somebody that's come short of the grace of God, there'll always be a root of bitterness that springs up at some point in their life.

If you've walked with Jesus long enough, you will know people who have professed Jesus, live for Jesus, serve Jesus, been in church with Jesus, sometimes on staff, sometimes not on staff, and a root of bitterness springs up over time where they get quote "mad" at God or confused by the gospel and they no longer want to serve Jesus. You can see it all over the news. There are pastors that have said stuff like this, "I don't know that Jesus is the only way anymore." I got news for you. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through him.

What we tend to think is they were a Christian then, but now they're not a Christian. And what the book of Hebrews has been saying is, they never were a Christian, they came up short of the grace of God. They never went all in with Jesus. Because if you're truly born again and you have Christ in your life, no matter what happens, you're hanging on to Him because you know, with Him, no matter how bad it gets, it's still better than life without Jesus. That's the gospel. And you should desire that in other people. BRAVE Church, listen to me, all of us have friends that claim to be

Christian, who, when we're around them, our spiritual temperature goes off, the Holy Spirit goes off, and like, "They don't feel like a Christian to me, but I don't know that I want to say anything." Why not? Why not? If they're really not, they're going to hell. And if we really love them, we'll share the truth.

Amen.

Somebody that is truly a Christian doesn't let a root of bitterness continue to grow. Somebody that's truly a Christian, when they're called on their sins, saying, "It's me. I was wrong. Against you and only you have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight." That's what it looks like. And so, make sure that you desire the fullness of grace in others. If you're genuinely a believer, you do desire it for other people. If you're not a believer and you're just a good person who's religious, you'll have thoughts like this, "That group of people doesn't deserve God's grace. That person doesn't deserve God's great. That person that's coming to family dinner at Thanksgiving, for sure, doesn't deserve God's grace."

If you're a Christian, you'll say, "They may be difficult, they may be unloving, but God, you've already showed me how gracious you've been to me, and my prayer is, that as difficult as they are to be around, I want them to know your love, because I know that you take no delight in the death of wicked people. Lord do something in them. I want them to experience the full measure of Jesus like I am, like I have." And in James four, God talks about, "But there's a greater grace." There's a greater grace. The good news this morning, BRAVE Church, is no matter how much grace from Jesus that you've received, you have not arrived yet. There's still more grace to be received.

I used to believe it was just black and white, in and out, I received all the grace I can, now I guess I just got to live my life for Jesus until He... No, there's a greater grace. I can continue to walk in Him every day. I continue to love Him more. I can know Him more. I can hear His voice more clearly. He'll take me through things that will grow me in Him. Some that are super enjoyable, and some that are extremely challenging. But no matter what, I'm holding on to Jesus, no matter what. Desire that in other people. Desire the grace of God and the fullness of the grace of God. See to it that no root of bitterness comes up.

Here's how you know there's a root of bitterness, when people are upset with people, and when people are upset with God. Root of bitterness. You hang out with people, they talk bad about their boss or your boss, they talk bad about your church or their church, they talk bad about your pastor or their pastor, they talk bad about your neighbor or their neighbor. They're just talking bad about other people. That's a root of bitterness. Don't listen to that. Christian, if you've been hurt by somebody, go to the Lord, he'll show you what to do and make it right. But you don't hold on to unforgiveness. And Christian, listen to me, when you're listening to other people complain, and slander, and gossip about others, that's unchristian behavior. You don't have ears for that, you walk away.

I find that people really don't like talking when you're not listening. "Well, you should have been at that church over there." "Pastor, you know that pastor over there, that church over there?" All you have to do is start talking like that to me and my ears

go deaf. I'll walk away from you. You know why? Because I know if you're talking about that pastor who God loves, it'll only be a matter of time until you're talking about me. I don't want to hear it. If you talk bad about your wife, I'm not hanging out with you. If you talk bad about your husband, I'm not hanging out with you, because I know that you're the problem.

Am I being clear? So, don't hang out with other people that are gossipy and slandering, unless you're going to call them on that. That's what it means to desire the fullness of God's grace in other people. That's what it means to not let a root of bitterness grow up. And then He goes on to say it like this, "And that there'd be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. 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 it with tears." Let no immoral or godless person. The Bible's replete on immorality. All different kinds of immorality, sexual immorality, behavioral immorality, emotional immorality, thinking about things that are immoral. Don't be immoral and don't be godless. Godless is pointless, vain religion.

It's the idea of going through the motion without any heart for God. Avoid all those things. And then it talks about Esau. Remember Esau? Jacob and Esau? Esau gave away his birthright. His birthright was God's blessing to him being the oldest child. It's what God wanted to lavish him with. And you know what? Esau didn't want it. He wanted to fulfill the desires of his flesh. He wanted what was in a moment rather than what God was promising him for a lifetime. He sold his birthright for a pot of red stew.

I read that story, I'm like, "Bro, I would've asked for something more than like Campbell's tomato soup or whatever." But he was so hungry at the time he gave up his future with God for what he could have in the moment. Don't do that.

And when he sought it, later in life, He was sorry that he lost it, he wanted it back, but he sought it without repentance. He could not repent. And I want to talk to you today because, church, we need to hear the difference between repentance and regret. There's a massive difference. And most people that go to church don't know the difference. They don't know how to spell out the difference. I'm going to read you a verse from second Corinthians, chapter seven and verse 10, and I want to unpack it a little bit as we're talking about this idea, it says, "For the sorrow that is according to the will of God," that's godly sorrow, "produces a repentance without regret." So, repentance doesn't have regret and it leads to salvation. But the sorrow of the world, worldly sorrow, produces death. So, there's a godly sorrow, when God gets a hold of me, that leads to repentance.

There's this worldly sorrow that leads to death and regret. So, what's the difference between repentance and regret? Because we realize that repentance leads to salvation, that's what we just read. If you want to be saved, repentance is part of it. The kindness of the Lord leads you to repentance. So, let me talk about what repentance really is, and we'll talk about what regret is. Repentance is this, it's full ownership, number one. Full ownership, when you sin, says this, "It's me. I did it. I was wrong, no doubt. Not blaming anybody else. I'm not blaming my circumstances. I'm not blaming my church, my school, my sports. It was me. I did it." That's where repentance

starts. Repentance starts with God the Father, through His Son, and by his Holy Spirit, convicting you of sin, convicting you of righteousness, convicting you of judgment.

When repentance begins, there's always an ownership of your sin.

Number two is this, you would say this, "I'm changing no matter what." A better way of saying that is, "I'm going to let God change me no matter what. God, you got this, I know I can't change myself, but I want to change. I do not want to stay where I'm at." That's repentance. Repentance means if you get caught in a sin, I own it and I don't want to stay with it, and I'm done with it. God do whatever you want to change who I am. Those are the first two steps of repentance. Let me give you a third. Third is this, "I don't care who knows." I don't care who knows, I don't care who finds out, I don't care if this goes public. It was me. I was wrong. God's changing me. What do I care? I'm not trying to save face. I'm not trying to make excuses. I'm not trying to paint it in a better light. I was wrong. This was bad. God change me.

God, do what you want to do. I don't care who knows. It doesn't matter. I'm not trying to keep it a secret. I'm being authentic with God and authentic with other people. Those are the three steps of repentance. Let me give you four. Fourth step is this, "I'm pursuing God. I want whatever God wants." I want what His word shows me in the church, with the leadership, I want whatever the leadership says that I need to do, just tell me what I need to do. What does it look like for me to get healthy? God, show me. Show me in your word. If you say it, that's what I'll do. If you put leaders in my life that reflect the word, I'll do what you tell me to do. And number five, here would be the feeling of somebody that's genuinely repentant, "I know I don't deserve God's grace. I

know I don't deserve His goodness, but boy, am I thankful for it."

Amen. Yes.

I don't deserve this. God has every right to punish me, has every right to give me everything I deserve. But boy, am I thankful that he's good to me? Boy, am I thankful for his... I don't deserve this. It's interesting, when repentance truly happens, sometimes it comes with tears. The Puritans called repentance the gift of tears, where there's incredible conviction of sin, an incredible contrition, and yet, incredible joy that God would still love you enough to continue to take that out of your life. That's repentance. Friends, you can't even become a Christian without repentance. Some of you that are here today, "I've never experienced that in my life." That's because you've experienced regret. Right?

And that's different. Let me spell out how regret looks different than repentance. You tell me where you're at, take a little inventory for yourself. If repentance is full ownership of your sin, like it's me, it's my fault, regret looks like this, "It's not totally my fault." You're not aware of the extenuating circumstances. You're not married to her, you weren't married to him, you don't have that boss, you don't have this group of employees, you don't know how this played out. You didn't see all the extenuating circumstances. "Yeah, maybe there's something in there that I need to think about. But it's not just me." That's how regret begins. Regret begins because you're not taking full ownership of your sin.

Then it leads to number two. If repentance is, "I'm holding on to God no matter

what, I'm going to change no matter what," regret looks like this, "I'm trying to change and I've made some progress." Keyword, I. You can't expect me to change too, I'm making some progress. Quit holding me accountable. Quit judging me. I've made some changes. I'm getting better. I'm working on this. Can I just short circuit this for a minute? If you could fix your sin, Jesus didn't need to die on the cross.

You, working on your sin, and working on your worrying, working on your anxiety, and working on your porn addiction, and working on your swearing, and working on your drunkenness, won't work. You can't change you. If you could change you, Jesus died for nothing. Regret starts with, "Yeah, I did some things wrong, but it's not totally my fault. And I'm working on it. I'm trying to get better." If repentance is, "I don't care who knows," regret would look like this, "My life is my private business. Stay out. Who are you to talk to me about my sin? You're a sinner too. I don't want to let anybody in. My life is my life. I can live how I want to live. Who are you to spell to me what I should be doing?" That's regret. And if repentance is, "I'm pursuing God," then regret would look like this, "I'm working on my brokenness. I admit I'm broken, everybody's broken, I'm working on it. I'm getting better. I'm, at least, trying. I go to church now. I'm in a small group, we talk about these things." That's different than repentance.

And then finally, if repentance is, "I don't deserve God's grace and goodness, but boy, am I thankful for it," people that live in regret act like this, "Why won't God bless me? I deserve it. I'm upset, or I'm sad." People that live in regret that have been in ministry will say things like this, "I've served God my whole life. And look at how he's treated me. If God was really as good as He says He is, then He would do something

different." That's regret. That's not repentance. There's no healing in regret. Some people think that churches for people that have regret think it's for people that struggle with things so they can work on their stuff and get better. No, that's the world solution. The church is for people who will admit that their biggest problem in their life is their sin and that they need Jesus Christ to completely absolve them of it. And after they become a Christian, they still come to Jesus because there's a greater grace and He's still growing you. Can I just be totally candid with you for a moment? Think I usually am.

Everything in my life that has changed is through repentance, not regret. Every time God's changed something in my life, minimally or significantly, it's been through repentance, not regret. Sometimes, I don't even feel like being repentant, but repentance involves a change of mind, a change of action, a change of behavior. That's why Jesus says, "Keep in fruits bearing with repentance." Keep on with fruits and keeping with repentance. If you're truly repentant, your behavior will change. If you're regretful, you'll probably be in the same place five minutes, five years, 50 years from now. If you're really sorry for your sin, you can say, "God changed me and He will change you." Everything in my life, my immorality, my drunkenness, the way I was in college, my swearing, my marriage, when we first got married, thinking I knew better than my wife, and all those different things didn't change because I went before the Lord and told him, "Okay, I'm working on this."

I went before the Lord and said, "Lord, this is wrong. I'm wrong. I don't know what to do. Help me to become what you want me to be because I know I can't

change myself. It's not working." And that's when God's going to work. That's still when God goes to work. You got an anger problem that you're working on, keep working, it's going to make you more angry. You got some money issues that you're working on? Keep working on them, you're just going to get more broke. But when you can come before the Lord, it's me, the reason that we're broke is because of me, the reason my marriage is failing, it may have something to do with my spouse, but I don't even care anymore, I know I'm contributing, it's me. The reason all my relationships aren't working out, it's me. The reason work's not working out, it's me. Lord, change me. That's called repentance.

And if you're not walking in repentance, if you're not walking out practical holiness, it says you won't see God, it's not talking... it's talking more metaphorically. You're not going to experience the fullness of who God is in your life apart from repentance. When you're in a small group and people are saying, "Well, I'm working on that this week," it's not going to work. Unless what they're working on is, "I'm working on giving this to God and letting him change me. Would you pray for me that I would give it to him? Would you pray for me that I would trust his ways? Would you pray for me, I would do what He wants me to do? Because I clearly can't fix this." And here's the beauty folks, no problem that you're in is unsolvable if you're repentant. Because when you repent, God lavishes his grace. It's the kindness of the Lord that leads us to repentance.

It's a great grace. It means this, "Hey friends, you came to church today. You don't have to change yourself, but God's willing to change you. The only thing is you

got to admit that you're the problem. He's not." "Well, I don't want to do that. I'm just going to keep working on it." That's the problem. That's why some people come short of the grace of God in church. Even when they go to good Bible-believing churches and serve their whole life, they're not truly Christians because they've never experienced Christ because they've never repented.

You say, Pastor Jeff, that everybody goes to church is going to heaven has to have that experience where they were dead and then they were alive? Yes, I am. "I've never really had an experience like that. I've always believed." No. The Bible says you were always born dead in your sins. And here's the truth, if you were physically dead and you were dying and they had to shock you back to life, you would remember the time where you couldn't remember and how you came alive again. How much more if you're spiritually dead and have been made alive in Christ would you not know? You haven't always been alive in Christ. You say, "Pastor Jeff, I've never had that experience." Then have it today. It's not an emotional experience. It's telling the Lord this, "Lord, if there's anything in me that I'm holding back from you, I want you to know that I want you to be the Lord in every area of my life, and whatever I need to do, I will bow my knee before you and let you take over." Just tell Him that.

And the hardened heart will say, "I'm not doing that. If He wants to come to me that way, there's got to be another way." There's no other way. It's you admitting your need for Christ. And that's why even in the church, even when we come to Christ, sin does not get eradicated. We still have a sin nature that creeps up. And that's why God

brings us to church so we can grow in holiness. And the way we grow in holiness is not through trying to be better people, and trying to have a better life as a single, and trying to have a better marriage, and trying to be better with my money, it's coming to a place that, "Jesus, you got to take this because I'm not good at it." And He's like, "I know I've been watching. I see you. Thank you for letting me take over. I'm good at this."

Jesus is good at fixing the broken. But quit telling all these people about what you are doing and how you're so spiritual. We get platitudes in the church from people that are unrepentant. But when you're broken, it's like, "I don't care who knows, my marriage is a mess, it ain't good. I got to get help. And man, it's me. God, I'll do whatever you want me to do." That's when God goes to work. So, pursue peace and holiness, desire the fullness of grace in others, and then He says this, "Embrace the new covenant." Now we spent a lot of time on that in this book, so I want to go through it rather quickly.

But think about this, before God gave the 10 commandments in Exodus 20, in Exodus 19, He told them what it was going to be like when He showed up on the mountain. When He showed up on Mount Sinai and He came down in fire, and smoke was going up to heaven and the whole mountain was trembling and the earth shook, and every Israelite was so terrified, they were like, "We don't want to hear God anymore. We're scared."

Just so you know, our God is terrifying and loving all at the same time. So, get this picture because He is telling them we're not going back to Sinai, "Hey, my friends,

you Jewish converts that want to go back to your religion, you don't want to go back there. Remember how scary that was?" And so He starts talking about Exodus 19 and then Deuteronomy nine, where Moses is reflecting on it. He says, "For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness, and to gloom, and a whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet, and the sound of words, which sound was so that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them, for they cannot bear the command, 'If even a beast touches the mountain, it'll be stoned.'"

And so, terrible was the sight that Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling." He's like, "You don't want to go back there." The Old Covenant was good and that God gave us the law, God showed us His holiness, God covered us for a season with the blood of animals to say, "I'm covering you until the Messiah comes, but it couldn't do anything for you. You don't want to go back there." Do you remember how scared our ancestors were when God said don't even let an animal touch the mountain, if it does it dies? Don't you touch the mountain. You touch the mountain, it dies. I am holy. You can't come near me. Even the people, when Moses is like, "Let's go listen to the Lord." They're like, "Ah, no, thanks. You go listen to the Lord for us." It's too scary.

Moses even said He was full of fear and trembling. Why? Because God is a consuming fire. It's terrifying. But He says, "That's not the mountain that you've come to." He's going to tell us that we've come to the new covenant. He's going to tell us that we've come to the mountain of Zion, the Mount Zion, He says in verse 22, "But you've come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to

myriads of angels, to the general assembly, and to the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect." Think of where we come, not to some earthly mountain, but to a heavenly city. We've come to experience the fullness of God's grace, it's heavenly. The Bible says we've already been seated in the heavenly positions in Christ Jesus, in Ephesians 2:6. Philippians 3:20 and 21 says we're already citizens of heaven and we eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Positionally, whether you know it or not, you're already seated in the heavenlies. Whether you know it or not, your number one nationality is kingdom. Wherever else you may choose to live around the globe, that's secondary to the fact that you're part of the kingdom of God. And he's the spirit into the spirit of the righteous made perfect. I mean, you think about this throne, we went through the book of Revelation, last year, I've had time to read it in Revelation four and five, just about all the things that are going around on the throne room of God and the heavenly creatures that we saw, and the 24 elders, and the myriads of angels, and all the saints that have gone before, and all those who have been martyred under the throne and they're worshipping the Lord and it's terrifying.

And when they worship, the 24 elders fall to their face, and they bow down, and they cast crowns because he's worthy. He's the only one who's worthy. I got to read it. In Revelation five, starting at verse 11, He said, "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, and the

number of them, myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands," that means uncountable, "saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches in wisdom and might in honor and glory and blessing.' And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all ends in them, all the things in them, I heard saying, 'To him who sits on the throne, and to the lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.' And the four living creatures kept saying, 'Amen.' And the elders fell down and worshiped."

Friends, when we entered the throne, we're going to be overwhelmed with loudness, and sounds, and sights, and terror, and love, like we've never experienced ever in our lives. That's who we're talking about. He's telling them, "You're not going back to that mountain, which just covered you with the blood. You're coming forward to the new city that you're a part of. The new Jerusalem is going to descend from the heavens that you're going to be a part of, that's going to set up a millennial reign of Christ all over the whole earth. You're part of the kingdom of God. It's who you are." And then He says, I love this, in verse 24, "And to Jesus..." The promise Messiah at the mountain is actually now living among us. Who's actually put on flesh, who actually died on a cross, who rose from the dead, "and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel."

The Bible says, there's one mediator between God and man, the man, Jesus Christ. There's only one way to heaven, and it's Jesus. There's only one way to the father, and it's Jesus. Why? Because his blood is better than that of Abel. We talked

about how Abel, through his sacrifice and even his death, that his testimony still speaks, how much more the blood of Jesus? His death still speaks because his blood not only covers, his blood is willing to cleanse anybody, anywhere, at any time, who has sinned. Is that good news, or what, this morning? Praise the Lord. It means no matter who you are, you don't have to go back to the law, you're working forward to grace, that God kept the law through His Son for us so that in Him, we have life in His name. And here's the New Covenant, Colossians 1:26 and 27 says, "This is the mystery that has now been revealed." What? "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Old Covenant is Messiah's coming, New Covenant is if you believe in God, through the person of Jesus, his presence through his Holy Spirit indwells you. And everywhere you go, there's where Jesus is. And He's willing to speak to you, and love you, and show you His grace and show you His standards, and show you how you can't keep Him, but show you how He, working through you, can. That's the beauty of the gospel. He's telling them, "You don't want to go back to the law." He's telling a bunch of people that are kind of Christians but not quite Christians, "Don't go back to your religion. Your religion won't do anything for you except a terrifying expectation of what your future looks like." If you've trusted in Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life, for the forgiveness of your sins, when you come into his presence, here's what you're going to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

If you come up short on grace, meaning you can know all the facts about God and all the good things, and you can give God a 50-year church attendance record of all the wonderful things you've done, and all the money you've contributed, and all the

ways that you've been nice to all people, but you've come up short and you've never allowed Jesus to be the Lord of your life, here's what you're going to hear, "Depart from me you worker of iniquity. I never knew you. Get out of here." And the fire and the terror of the Lord are going to begin to consume you. It's terrifying. Here's what he's saying, "Don't go back to your religious preferences, forward yourself to the kingdom of God through Jesus."

Make that choice. Make the choice to embrace the New Covenant, the New Covenant in his blood, which was shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. The New Covenant, which is your new identity in Christ. The New Covenant, which is the promise of God to secure you forever. Embrace that covenant. There is no other worth embracing. No matter where you go and no matter who you talk to, I can tell you this on the authority of God's word, Jesus Christ is always and will always be the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him.

So, once we've done these things... I mean, these are three good choices, right? Choosing peace and holiness, choosing the fullness of grace in others, choosing to embrace the new covenant, then He says this, now this is a fourth choice, really important choice, "Refuse to reject God's word." He goes, "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking, for those did not escape when they refused Him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. "He says, "If people didn't escape under the Old Covenant when they didn't listen to Moses, how much more will they not escape when God is giving us his living and active word through himself, in His Son, when we don't obey it?" Friends, I'm

here to tell you that I think the word of God is completely true. From Genesis 1:1 all the way through Revelation 22:21, I believe every single word is authoritative from God and will be unchangeable.

Amen.

The Bible says the grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our Lord stands forever. Jesus said in Luke 29, "Anyone who is ashamed of me and my words, I will be ashamed of him when I come." Everything Jesus says is about his word. I'm just telling you, as your pastor, I believe it all is true, even some of the things I can't explain. It's interesting, if you believe in the authority of God's word, you can get together with all sorts of other Christians, and about 90 to 95% of all the scripture, you can agree on. I've met some pastors that love the word. We've differed on about five to 10%. And when they get to heaven, God will show them they're wrong. And I'm okay with that. Right? We don't need to get hung up on the five or 10%. We need to get hung up that when God says it, if He says it, and we understand it's true.

Amen.

Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Where did we all come from? God. Who created everything? God. What He created out of? Nothing. Well, then who created God? God wasn't created. He's always been here. Well, how can that be? Because He's God. Well, how many days did He create the world in? Well, it says six and He rested on the seventh. So, I'm just going to go with, He created it in six and rested on the seventh. Because if I don't believe that, if that's

not totally true, then how can John's 3:16 be totally true? If we're going to start wavering on the word of God, waver on it all. Or hold it, it's all true. Friends, it's all true. And there's an incredible return on investment for those that will place themselves under the authority of God's word and says, "If God said it, I'm placing myself under the authority, even if it's uncomfortable, even if I don't totally understand it because I want to honor him." Amen?

Amen.

If God used mere men to bring his word in the Old Testament as prophets, and people were punished for not listening to them, how much more now having sent his own son who told us the full revelation of who God is if we reject him? Friends, don't reject his word. His word tells us the truth. His word tells us that He's appointed a man to die once, and after that, faced judgment. The word tells us that it's a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. The Bible tells us that we know a tree by its fruit, Matthew seven, "A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit." And if it's a bad tree that produces bad fruit, it's going to be picked up and get burned. All Throughout the Bible, it says, if you're not living God's way, you're not going to make it into the kingdom.

So, pay attention is what He says. It's interesting to me when I read John chapter 15 of God's incredible love for us. And He says, "I am the true vine. And my father is the vinedresser." Jesus, the vine, He's the life, and the Father's preparing the branches. He says, "Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away. And every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so it may bear more fruit." Take away

means He lifts it up. Every branch in him, the branch is in Christ. He tends him. He takes care of him. He lifts him up. He loves you. If you're in Christ, He loves you. He's moving things. He's pruning it. He's cutting it back. He's not cutting the vine away, He's just healing you, he's growing you. He loves you enough to not leave you where you are.

But He goes on later and says, "Apart from him, you can do nothing." And He says, "Every branch that has knotted me," those are people that come short of the grace of God. What does He do? They get picked up and thrown into the fire and burned. If you're in Christ and He's disciplining you, grow from the discipline. If you're in Christ, make good choices so you won't have to be disciplined. But if you're not in Christ, even your best efforts don't connect you to the vine.

Amen.

Only God can connect you through the vine. He told you the way, the way is Jesus. You can have a relationship with him today, but refuse to reject God's word. Friends, there are people coming, I'm just telling you because I see them in our culture all the time, that are very good speakers, that are very good communicators, that talk about how much they love God, that at some point they may say stuff like this, "Well, you can't believe all this book. Because let me give you an argument here, let me give you an argument..." Never listen to them. I'm just telling you they're wrong 100% of the time. And they may look smart here, but they won't look that smart when they're standing before God. Maybe said of me, may at least be said of me, that when I die, I

can stand before the Lord, and said, "I did my best to preach your word faithfully and not change a doggone thing about what you said." Amen?

Amen.

Paul told Timothy in second Timothy, "Preach the word." I give my right arm to preach the word. I got it tattooed on my arm, preach the word. That's what I'm giving my life to, that people can hear God and then respond to Him accordingly. Why? Because there's going to be a shaking that happens. Notice what He says, verse 26, he says, "And His voice shook the earth then," on that mountain is what he's talking about, "but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.'" That's Haggai 2:6. This expression yet wants more denotes the removing of those things, "which can be shaken" as of created things so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Perhaps you've lived through an earthquake before, perhaps you've been in an earthquake before. Scary thing.

When Jesus died on the cross, there was an earthquake, at Mount Sinai, there was an earthquake. Apparently, according to the word of God, there's going to be a heaven quake as well as an earthquake that's coming. The whole universe is going to quake. Picture it like God taking his heavenly rug and just shaking out all the stuff that are not connected to the kingdom. If you're not connected to the kingdom, you will be shaken all the way to hell. It's going to be terrifying. Jesus tells us when people are asking, "Well, when's this going to happen? And what's the sign of your coming?" He says in Matthew chapter 24, He tells them exactly what's going to happen, in verse 29, here's what He says, Matthew chapter 24, verse 29, He says, "But immediately after

the tribulation of those days," after the tribulation period, "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

There's coming a shaking, a terrifying shaking. So, where do you see that on the book of Revelation? You see it in Revelation six, starting in verse 12, when the sixth seal is opened, "I looked when He broke the six seal, and there was a great earthquake and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Then the Kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free men hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the presence of him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lord, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'"

When this heaven quake happens, this universe quake, this earthquake, all the great people of the world that refuse to believe in Jesus are going to be shaken to their core, where they're going to pray that they would be crushed by a rock rather than to have the wrath of God on them. Here's what he's saying, "There's a day that's coming." He's telling these people, "Don't look forward to that. Don't be a part of that. Be connected to Christ. Be part of the new covenant. Believe God's word. Believe the faithful preachers that are telling you. If you've not trusted in Jesus, quit waiting around

another second. Give him your entire life now." That's what He's saying. Give Him everything. The great day is coming. But for those of us who are in the kingdom, when that happens, oh man, we're going to see the Lord Jesus appear in the sky, He's going to take us home, with men and women from every tribe, tongue and nation from all over the world. It's going to be the most glorious thing that we've ever been a part of.

So, refuse to reject God's word. Refuse to reject it. Don't listen to people that try to water it down. Don't listen to people that tell you that it's not true. Every part of this book is true. Every part is just as it said. Not one jot or tittle will be taken away from this book. If you don't like this book, you don't like God. If you don't love this book, you don't love God. If you don't obey this book, you don't love God. This is his word. This is him speaking. Amen?

Amen.

Give you a fifth one really quick here. If you're going to choose and make a good choice, this fifth choice show gratitude, reverence, and awe. For the Lord, show gratitude, show reverence, and show awe. Notice what He says in verse 28, "Therefore, since we receive a kingdom and we're part of that kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude," that's thanks, "by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe." Why? I love verse 29, especially for people like... "Yeah, Jesus is weak. You're just a Christian because you need a crutch. You just can't make it through life on your own. Your God's not that big. No, here's what it says, "For our God is a consuming fire." Our God's a blazing inferno. Our God

is terrifying, and yet he's loving. I've never met a quote "friendly lion."

It's how our God is pictured, ferocious and caring all at the same time, for those who know him. He's a consuming fire, he's going to devour everything. Anyone and anything that has set himself up or herself up apart from the grace of God will be consumed in his wrath, will be taken to the lake of fire in his wrath, will get their due judgment in his wrath. Why? Because God made a way of peace for you and you've rejected it. He goes, "See to it that you make these good choices. See to it that you pursue peace. See to it that you pursue holiness. See to it that you want to see the full measure of grace in other people's lives. See to it that you refuse to reject his word and show gratitude, and awe, and reverence to him. See to it that you embrace this new covenant."

See to it. Reverence means that God's terrifying, that he's worthy of all of our praise. He's worthy of all of our praise. You heard in our service today, as we were worshiping, the command to sing to the Lord. "Yeah, but I don't like to sing." Well, sing anyway. Because he's worthy. He's worthy. He's worthy. And friends, if you begin to make these choices and let Jesus Christ be first in your life, I promise you, there's no regret, and there's an incredible return on investment. And here's the good news, He's willing to do that for any of you. His desire is that none would perish but that all would come to repentance. He wants you to know that He's not the problem, you are. Own it. Believe it. And if you've never trusted Him, trust Him today. And if you are a believer and you think God's the problem, you're still the problem. Let Him take over in your life too. Friends, we gather not because we're good people getting better, we gathered

because we were dead people who have now been made alive. Amen?

Amen.

Let's thank him, let's worship him, let's honor him. Would you stand with me as we pray? Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor, and praise for who you are. Lord, we love you. Father, you are worthy, you are terrifying, you are awesome, you are holy, and yet at the same time, you are all mercy, and you are all grace, and you are all love. Father, we give you our praise. We thank you for who you are. If you're listening today and you've never trusted Jesus Christ to be the Lord of your life, here's how you can pray, Lord Jesus, I realize today I'm the problem. Perhaps I've been religious, perhaps I've seen myself as a good person today, I know I'm the sinner.

Lord, come into my life and forgive me, wash me clean, indwell me. Be the Lord of my life. I want to turn from my sin and I want you to be the Lord and savior of my life. Save me, Lord Jesus. And for those of you here who've been working on your stuff, there's no more stuff to work on, just confess your sin, turn from it, ask Jesus Christ to heal you in this moment. God, we give you all the praise for what you're going to do. In Jesus' name, we worship you, amen and amen. Can we give God praise this morning for who He is? Amen.