



Message Transcript

Staying Strong After Your Fast

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Pastor Jeff:

Our father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise. Lord, we praise you as a church for all that you continue to do in our lives. You are so worthy. And Lord, we gather today as a congregation to give you glory and to tell you that you deserve all of our praise. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that every time that it is studied, memorized, or faithfully and accurately proclaimed, Lord, that you have a word for us. And Lord, today we pray that you would do your work in and through us. And so for now for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord speak, who will believe exactly what he says to you, and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly by saying the word amen?

Amen. Today I want to talk to you about staying strong after your fast. I want to talk to you about staying strong after your fast. If you're visiting with us today, you may not know, but we've spent 21 days of prayer and fasting, and what that has meant is different people in our congregation have taken different amounts of time to seek the Lord in prayer. Some people have chosen to fast all 21 days from food. Some people have chosen to fast one meal during the 21 days from food. Some people have done juices, some people have gone away from social media for a period of time. But the whole purpose has been so that we as a church can seek the face of God more clearly, so that we can hear from him, and so that God can direct us, show us what he's been wanting to tell us, both individually and corporately.

I just want to tell you as your pastor, it's been such an honor just to hear back from so many of you that have just taken a step or some steps by being more intentionally about seeking the Lord in this season. I believe when God looks down from heaven and he sees a church that says, "Lord, we want to depend more upon you, we want to be more obedient to you, we want to do what you want. Lord, our hearts are wide open to receive everything you have," that God looks down with great delight and says, "Now there's a church that I can use. There's a church I can do great things with." Prayer will always be the bedrock and foundation of who we are at Brave Church. And I can tell you as your pastor, it's been an honor in these last 21 days to help lead us through this season.

For some of you, you've received incredible answers to prayers. Some of you are seeing God begin to answer your prayers. Some of you have seen absolutely no answers to your prayers, and I know that that's true and that's okay. But I want to tell you that there's a great return on investment anytime that you seek the face of the Lord, because the purpose is not to get God to answer our prayers, the purpose is that we can get to know God more intimately and that we can grow with him. However, as this fast comes to a close, I find in my journey with the Lord over the last 32 to 34 years, I find that every time that I walk with the Lord and God's doing something special and I'm excited and he begins to show me about, "Hey, this is where we're going to move individually or this is where you're going to move corporately," that every time that I take steps in that direction expecting it to be easy, it actually gets harder.

How is it that you can continue to stay strong after your fast. If you're visiting with

us, you could ask this question, "How can I continue to journey with the Lord when he shows me a direction that I need to go?" Because I find people all the time, they go to conferences, camps, retreats, they come back all fired up and they're like, "From this moment on, here's how I'm going to live," only to find that there's opposition to it. And that day or the next day or a week later, you're kind of right back where you started. And if you ever wanted to know how to continue to journey with the Lord, I believe God has a word for you. Today I'm going to invite you to open up your Bibles to Matthew 4, Matthew 4.

We're going to take a week off from the book of Exodus. Lord willing, we'll be back in it next week, but I felt this was more timely. On Thursday, I was sensing Exodus 21 is not where we're at with baptisms. God has a special word for us, and even yesterday as he was unfolding it for me, I was like, "This is where we need to be." As you're turning to Matthew 4, you may find yourself very familiar with this story. This is right before Jesus begins his public three-year ministry, prior to which he has just been baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan, and the chapter ends with the Father speaking out loud so that all those around can hear. "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." Make no mistake about it, Jesus Christ is God's one and only son. We know that from the scriptures, but we also know it from that scene where the Father speaks that word over his son in front of everyone, and this is where our story picks up, prior to Jesus starting his ministry.

Here's what it says, chapter four verse one. Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into

the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, and after he had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, he then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But he answered and said, it is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple and he said to him, "If you are the son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written, he will command his angels concerning you and on their hands, they will bear you up so that you will not strike your foot against the stone."

Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test." Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdom, all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to him, "All these things I will give you if you fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Go Satan, for it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only." The devil left him and behold, angels came and began to minister to him. As you heard in that read over you this morning, just by show of hands, how many have heard some or all of that story before, right? Very familiar and yet nestled in this story, we really learn some of the secrets about how to stay strong in our spiritual journey as we're continuing to grow with the Lord. I want to highlight four ways, four truths that you can know about your enemy that will help you continue to advance.

All four of these truths are simple, they're clear, you'll find them all over your Bible, and yet I find for many Christians, they either are unaware of these truths or they don't know how to apply them in your life. If you're looking to take a step away

from your old life and step into your new life and continuing to journey, these four truths will be paramount for you in your growth with Jesus. Let's just start. Let's let's highlight all four of these. The first is this, if you're going to stay strong after your fast, if you're going to continue your journey, think about truth number one, the enemy is not a fairytale of an idea but a real being. The enemy of your soul, the devil himself, is not a fairy tale of an idea but a real being. Here's what I would say to that.

Don't be surprised that you will experience opposition and temptation when you take steps of faith. Do not be surprised. Now, it's interesting because Jesus was baptized and you would think if you were studying the scriptures, this would just go from baptism to ministry. He's baptized. Now he's getting ready, he's going to go do his public ministry, but that's not what the scriptures teach. The scriptures teach that the spirit of God was leading Jesus to do something. Notice chapter four verse one. "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." That's interesting, isn't it? Why would Jesus need to be tempted by the devil? Well, we know that Jesus Christ is God, so we know that God can't sin. And even though Jesus is fully human and fully divine, he cannot sin. It is impossible for God to sin. So why would he be led by the Spirit to be tempted to sin when we know that he can't sin? Because this was validating who he was before his ministry got started.

You're also going to see in this text that this shows that Jesus Christ is the only fully human that has ever lived that is without sin. God's one and only son. When you see the way that the enemy's going to tempt Jesus, you'll see how you and I have fallen to his tricks every single time. But you need to realize this, there is an enemy and

he's real and he exists and he's a spiritual being that is created by God. Now, here's why I say that. Many of you at Brave Church would say, "Oh, I know that's true, but I grew up in a church that didn't teach that. I grew up in a church where Satan was more of a mythological character or just a personification of evil, and yeah, there's bad out there and there's good out there, but I don't know that I really believe in a real Satan that's a real being that is really active." I'm here to tell you Satan is a real being that was created by God who is really active in the lives of non-believers and believers.

Here's how he works in the minds of non-believers. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says he has blinded the minds of non-believers so that they cannot see the light of the glory of the gospel. I'm paraphrasing. What it means is if you're not a believer in Jesus, he will blind your eyes to the fact that Jesus Christ is the one and only Lord, that he is the way, the truth, and the life, and that he's the only hope that you have and that he's your only salvation. Every nonbeliever is completely blinded. That's why even if you give them facts, you're like, "I'm telling them all the truth. They just don't see it." Why? They can't. They're being blinded by the devil. It's only through Christ that those blinders can be removed and then we see Christ in who he is so clearly.

As an unbeliever, I want you to know the devil doesn't care if you're religious or irreligious. The devil doesn't care if you're known as a good person or a bad person. The devil doesn't care if you're somewhat good in this group and not so good in that group. He doesn't care how you live so long as you don't come to the realization that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. That's all he cares about with non-believers. That's why you'll meet some non-believers that are seemingly moral and

some non-believers that are seemingly immoral. The devil doesn't care, because he owns them. Because from the time that you're born, the devil is your daddy. That's the reality. And he's a real being, right? Now when it comes to believers, then this is how the believer, here's how it works for the believers, for those of us who have turned from our sin and repented and believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to and dwell us forever. At the moment of conversion, we belong to God forever.

There is nothing we can do to sin our way out of God's hands. There's nothing we can do or God would be like, "I've had enough of you. Get gone." Christ paid for our sins. He paid for all of them. We're completely forgiven. The devil even knows that, which is why he goes to work on the believer and he does things in the life of the believer to keep you from living out the fullness of who Jesus wants you to be on this side of heaven. You're not blinded to the truth. You know Jesus is the truth. He just makes it difficult for you to prioritize Jesus and to walk with him, and that's what we're going to see in this story, that the devil is a real being. So he's led by the Spirit, he's led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after he had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, one of the most brilliant truths in the New Testament, he then became hungry.

Anybody's been doing that fast with us, you know that's true. We haven't done 40 days, but 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus in his humanity was hungry. Now, make no mistake about it, the devil's a real being. I don't have time to go through all the theology of it today, but I'll give you a couple passages that you can start with. One is in Isaiah

14. Isaiah 14, we hear about who he is and what his desires are. I won't read the whole chapter. I'll start in verse 12 and read a few verses. It says, "How you have fallen from heaven, oh, star of the morning, son of the dawn. You have been cut down to the earth, you have you who have weakened the nations, but you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven. I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of the assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the most high."

Why did Satan get booted from heaven? Because as Satan was leading the worship in heaven and all the worship was going beyond him to the throne and God was receiving all the glory, Satan began to think in his heart, why are we worshiping him? I'm beautiful too. Why don't I get some of this worship? Why doesn't some of this come my way? I want to ascend to heavens. I want to be known as a God. I want to be the one on top. And it was his pride that got him kicked out. Keep that in the back of your mind as we understand who he is and what he's going to do in your life.

Another passage you can look at is Ezekiel 28, although talking about the King of Tyre, also highlights the personification of the devil himself. Starting in verse 12 of Ezekiel 28, he says, "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. Make no mistake about it, when God creates, he creates beautiful things. Satan was beautifully created. You are in Eden, the garden of God, the garden of God. Every precious stone was recovering the ruby, the topaz." He goes on to talk about it and he says this, "On the day that you were created, they were prepared." What is Satan? He's created. God is not created. There is no beginning and no end to

God. Satan is a created being. Make no mistake about it. Sometimes when it comes to spiritual warfare, we think God's the good powerful one, Satan's the bad powerful one, and they're both equal battling it out.

No, God is the only powerful authoritative one, and Satan is a created being that's fallen that's totally dependent upon that God. Okay? You need to realize because he's a liar, and John 8 says he's the father of lies, and every time he opens his mouth, he's lying. He will lie to you and get you to believe that he has authority and power that he does not have, but Jesus Christ holds all authority and holds all power in this life and in the life to come. Amen. But you need to realize he's a real being. He's a real being.

John 10:10 says it this way, "The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy, but I have come that you might have life and have it to the full." What Satan's desire in the life of humans beings? To take away everything that God destined and designed for them. Satan is angry, because Satan wanted to be God. Satan wanted to be on the throne. And when Satan saw that God created human beings in his image from the dust on the ground and was going to make them higher than the angels to rule over them in the life to come, that makes him mad. What does he want to do? He wants to get us to act like he acted. How did he act? He tried to put himself in the place of God. How does he tempt our first parents? By trying to put them in the place of God. How does he tempt you? By trying to put you in the place of God. You say, "I don't want to be a God." Anytime you say, "The most important person in my life is me," you're being God. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Now, here's why I'm telling you about this, that Satan is real. He's not a made up character. If you begin to walk with God, you will notice more opposition, more resistance, and more temptation than you ever have before. I say the hardest step that you'll ever have to take is the next step. But when you take the next step, you will be accompanied by more temptation, more opposition, and more resistance. Which is why many Christians, even when they come out of a time of this was so great, I really enjoy this, I love the Lord, here's what I'm going to do now, they make it about a day or two and then they find themselves right back to where they were before they started. It's because it's normal to have opposition. It's normal to have resistance. And it's normal to have increased temptation.

I've been walking with the Lord for 34 years. Every time I take a deeper step of faith, I can tell you temptation's stronger in my life, opposition is stronger in my life, and resistance is stronger in my life every time I try to get closer to Jesus. And the same that's true for me is for you. Do you know when it ends? When you take your final step of faith and you meet Jesus face to face, then there's no more temptation. There's no more opposition. There's no more resistance. There's just pure beauty beholding our savior together forever and ever. Amen. Right? But I don't want you to be alarmed, and this is why I say this, because sometimes people have said to me, "Pastor Jeff, I don't know if I'm a Christian anymore." I'm like, "Why?" "I'm so tempted all the time. I mean, I should have all these hard things going on in my life. I feel like I'm sinning more. I want to stop sinning."

I'm like, "That's a great sign that you're a Christian." Non-believers don't want to stop sinning. Nonbelievers aren't aware of their sin. Nonbelievers aren't feeling temptation. They don't even know it's temptation and they're just swimming in it. Make no mistake about it, you have an enemy that is real and not a fairytale, so don't be surprised when you experience opposition.

Let me give you four ways that he does it in my life. The first is distraction. Distraction. During this fast, I mean there were so many times I sat down to journal and I'm just taking time to seek the face of the Lord, and within the first five minutes, all I'm thinking about is what store I need to run to and what I need to buy for my son and what I need to do for my wife today and what do I got on my calendar? Next thing I know, I'm five to 10 minutes in my prayer and I haven't even prayed because all I'm thinking about is all the agenda on my day. I'm sure I'm the only person that's ever happened to. It's called distraction. I say I want to focus on the Lord and Satan's got phone calls coming in and he's got emails showing up and he's got people knocking on my door that need my attention right then. Right? That's called distraction. He's always working to distract you from getting closer to Jesus.

Second is this, discouragement. Discouragement. Satan will always discourage you. You know why? Because he's a liar. The Bible says that you're fearfully and wonderfully made. The Bible says God loves you with unconditional love. For those of you who have repented and trusted Jesus, you are his beloved daughter or you are his beloved son. Nothing can change that. You are loved. He cares about you. He has purpose for you. He has joy for you. So what does the enemy want to do? Discourage

you.

You ever get ready to go to pray and then you get a word from a friend or from the doctor or somebody else, a total word of discouragement? Your health is bad, your finances are bad, you're being let go from the job, somebody spoke bad things about you, any way just to discourage you. Gets you to think about your lot in life. Is this where you thought your life was going to end up? You said you wanted to follow God and look where you are. Your life is worse now than it was before you trusted Jesus. Discouragement, he uses that.

How about this one? I say the word deflate or deflation, where discouragement goes one more step. We're now it's just like, "Ugh, I hate my life. Why do I have to go through all this? How come nobody else has to go through what I'm going through? I just feel lousy. I mean, I'm supposed to be a Christian and be happy about all this stuff, and I'm totally discouraged, and everybody else seems to be okay in their marriage, but I'm not. Everybody else seems to be okay with their kids, but I'm not. Everybody else seems to like their job, but I don't. Everybody else seems to be doing in school, but not me. Everybody else is pretty happy about their future with God, but not me." Deflates you. That's what he does. He comes to rob. His only superpower is his voice. He has no power and authority over your life, but he can lie to you and tell you that he does, and if you believe him, that's when you have problems.

Now, Jesus has given him some authority. He's called the prince of the power of the air. He's been given some authority over this earth, but know this, it's all under the

rulership of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has no power to act independently on your life. The only thing he can do is lie to you and say things like this, "I'm going to take that away. I'm going to take that away. If you do that, I'm going to take that away." He can't do it. Not without God's permission. Amen? And that's what he does in our lives.

If I give a fourth word, it would just be destroyed. I've watched some Christians destroy their life by bad choices after they've made bad choice after bad choice after bad choice, saying they love the Lord, but listening to the lie, becoming discouraged, and then feeling deflated, and then making an even worse choice, where now all of a sudden everything's opened up and how did I get here and how do I get back and all that stuff. I have good news if that's you. Our God is a redeemer and he's able to bring you back and set you on higher ground. Amen?

But I want to tell you this, because sometimes you'll be in Christian circles, they'll be like, "Well, the devil's not really real." I know he's real. I'm familiar with what his voice sounds like. I know what his breath feels like. I know when God tells me something and I step there, I can almost expect what I'm about ready to hear next. So don't be discouraged and don't be upset if you have more opposition and resistance and temptation. It's a sign that you're getting ready to grow. I mean, right before Jesus launches his three-year ministry, the best ministry that will ever have been done, the best ministry on the planet, he's taking him through this time of temptation. The enemy's not a fairytale of an idea, but a real being.

Number two is this. Notice this, the enemy is not haphazard in his approach, but timely. The enemy's not haphazard in his approach, but timely. Don't be surprised by

when you are tempted. Notice this, it says that he took him in the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After he had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, he then became hungry. It was then that we see in verse three, the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the son of God, command that these stones become bread." Now, why would the tempter tempt Jesus to eat after 40 days and 40 nights of fasting? Clue? Because he's hungry. The devil has game film on your life. He knows when you have a proclivity to sin. He knows those times that you're most vulnerable, right? Do you know what they are for you?

I know when I'm tired, that's one. I know after I've spent myself in ministry for a season, that's one. I know after I've traveled for a period of time, that's one. Are you aware of them? Do you share with your family what some of those times are? Do you share with your spouse what some of those times are? If you don't know when your times are and you're married, ask your spouse. They'll be able to tell you. Or ask your kids. Sometimes on Saturdays my kids will be like, "Dad, it's Saturday. Go back to your office and keep studying. Nobody likes you right now." Right? Because they know that's a vulnerable time for me. If you're aware, then you can do battle. But if you're not aware, that's when the enemy comes in. He looks for opportune times. After he leaves Jesus here, he's going to show up again when Jesus starts telling his disciples he's going to go to the cross. He shows up again in the garden of Gethsemane.

He times his plot perfectly. He's a lion that prowls around looking for someone to devour. He's not on you all the time. He picks and chooses. He waits until you're a little frustrated. He knows that if your child says something like this, it is going to set you off

on the specific day. He knows just how to place the right things in your life. That's what he's good at. So what's he coming to Jesus to do? Well, when he's hungry, he's going to attempt him to make food. Why wouldn't he? He's not haphazard in his attempts, but he's timely.

Now, why do I say this? Because I find after 34 years, I've said that a lot today. I've gotten I'm old. I find that the longer I walk with the Lord for every spiritual high, there's an equal spiritual low. I've watched guys come back from promise keepers all fired up to live a new way. I've watched kids from camp come back all fired up to live a new way. I've watched people from retreats come back all fired up to live a new way, only to not even make it a day.

When I was a youth pastor, before we would come home, I would pull the bus over to the side of the road when we were about two hours outside of town and I would make the kids tell me, "What was your biggest takeaway from the weekend?" We had 50 or 100 kids. It took a long time. And they would start telling me, here's what I take away and here's what I do. And I would tell them this, "In the next 24 hours, you will have more temptation and opposition to everything you just decided to do than you ever had before you left." I would have people, they make kind of phony promises, because some kids would get fired up.

Do you remember we didn't have digital music back in those days. We had things called CDs. Does anybody know what a CD is? We had CDs and kids would hear that they needed to listen to Christian music and then someone would vow they're going to

come home and throw away all their secular CDs and only listen to Christian music. And after watching that for a period of time, I would say, "That's just poor stewardship. You're going to throw them out and buy them back three years, three weeks later. Just keep them and honor the Lord in what you listen to," that kind of thing. But there were some people that would make serious commitments. There would be somebody that would say, "Well, I'm dating this boyfriend or I'm dating this girlfriend and they're not a Christian and we're not honoring God in our relationships and we've been immoral and I know God doesn't want that for me anymore and I want to act pure."

I would tell Them," those are great decisions. God's going to honor that. But I'll tell you this, when you get home in the next 24 hours, your boyfriend or your girlfriend's going to look the best they've ever looked. They're going to be the sweetest to you they've ever been." And sure enough, our bus would pull in about two hours later into the parking lot and not only would moms and dads be there to pick people up, but guess who would be there? The boyfriends and the new polished car, the girlfriends. They'd look out the window and they're like, "Pastor Jeff, you were right." I'm like, "I was. Because I know how the enemy works. He's not creative. So what are you going to do?" Here's why I'm telling you that, because during this fast, for some of you, God may have shown you some things that he wants you to walk away from or some different ways in which you can live.

When God does that, whether it's through a fast or at any time in your life, when he says, "I want you to set this aside, and this isn't even necessarily sinful for you, but I want you to set it aside for you because of our relationship, and I want you to start

walking this way," I promise you you'll have more opportunities for that than you've ever had in your entire life no matter what that is. For some of you, I've talked to you during this 21 days and you said, you know what? You've struggled with alcohol and you're setting aside alcohol and you don't just want alcohol to be gone now. You want it to be gone for good and you're starting to walk away from it. I promise you, in the next 24 hours you'll have more opportunities to go out and party with your friends than you ever had before. Right?

I mean for me, as I was doing this, the Lord spoke to me on some things and I'll talk about it more later as I get victory in that area, but one of the things is just the way I eat. I don't eat super well. God started showing me this and I'm like, "okay, Lord, I know what you want me to do. I started writing down the ways Lord wanted me to do." You know, I've been invited to dinner like six times this week. They tell me what we're going to go eat and I'm like, "That's what I used to eat. I'm not eating that way anymore." Right? You'll have opportunity if you're going to walk away from immorality, which is a good thing to walk away from, you'll have more opportunities for immorality. Whatever you're going to walk away from to get closer to the Lord, the enemy will be like, "Oh, seriously, you're going to leave me. I want to help with that. Are you sure you want to go?"

When God called me into ministry, and I knew for sure he was calling me to be a pastor, and I was 24 years old, and I'd left my job and I had nothing else going on, I'm like, "Yeah, God, I'm doing this." The day I made the decision, I had three job offers making twice as much money as I did the day I said I was going to go into ministry. It

was as if the Lord was like, "Are you going to follow me or are you going to see this?" Every time in my life I've stepped forward in a new realm, there's always opportunity to continue to stay where I'm at or go backwards. The same that's true for me is true for you. That's what the enemy does. That's why I need you to know not only is he real, but he's not haphazard.

He's not haphazard. He's timely. It's interesting, after he leaves this scene, he shows up the next time when? When Jesus is asking disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter says, "Well, you're the son of God. You're the Messiah." He said, "Well, blessed are you because my father in heaven revealed that to you." We're like, "Great." From then on, he began to tell people he was going to go to the cross, suffer and die. And what does Peter do? He pulls them aside and says, "Never Lord." And what does Jesus say? "Get behind me, Satan, you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men." He was looking for that opportunity to get Jesus off track to go to the cross. He was looking to get Jesus off track in the garden when he was sweating drops of blood when he prayed for three hours in the garden and asked Peter, James, and John just to come along and pray with them, and three times he goes back and they're out cold. He's like, "Could you not stay awake with me for at least an hour?"

Why was he sweating drops of blood? He wasn't just thinking about the physical crucifixion he was going through. He was thinking about the fact that God, the Father who he loved was going to pour all his wrath out upon him and for the first time feel the separation of sin. Can't you hear what the devil may have been saying in his ear? "Are

you sure you want to do that? You don't have to do that. I mean, why would you do that for all these people? They all hate you anyway. They're going to abandon you anyway. Why not just go back to heaven? All the angels will still worship you. Everything will be good." Can you imagine the voice of the enemy in Jesus' ear at that time? That's why he prays, "Dad, not my will, but your will be done." Dad, I want to do what you do. I'm only going to do what you do. I'm not going to listen to that liar.

Some of you need to shut the voice of the liar. Some of you are discouraged, some of you are upset, some of you are frustrated, not because of Jesus, but because you believe the voice of the enemy who then says that that's the voice of Jesus. Our God's a good God. Amen? He loves you. Amen? He's a real being, but he's not haphazard. The more that you're aware of when the enemy might attack, the greater chance you have for success. It doesn't mean you'll always be aware, but the more success that you will have.

This is why this is important. When I was a young kid, when we had television, there were only about 13 channels, and if you wanted to watch a show, there was no such thing as recording it, so you had to watch it at the exact time that it came on, and if you missed it, you missed the show. Can you imagine that? When I was being babysat as a little kid, there was a show that I always wanted to stay up for. My babysitters were nice to me. It was called The Love Boat. You remember that show? I don't know why I liked it as a kid, but everybody's all happy on this boat sailing off to paradise.

Here's what I thought. I thought when I became a Christian, that's the boat that I was getting on. Because I grew up religious and I was a religious kid and I was a good kid and I tried to keep the 10 commandments and I got confirmed in the church and I took communion and I got baptized as an infant, all the things I thought I'd checked the box and were supposed to do. Here's the problem. I didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Now, when I turned 18 and I repented of my sins and gave my life to Christ, all the scripture I had memorized made sense. I knew the word and I was like, "Now I'm going to live for the Lord." When the blinders removed off my life, I had never been tempted like I had been tempted in my entire life. I went from being a good kid to a kid that was struggling between being a good kid and a not so good kid. Because the reality is when you come to Christ, you're not getting on the love boat to cruise off into eternity, you've just gotten on a battleship for kingdom Jesus to go to war, and we're at battle for the souls of ourselves and for others. Amen? That's what I'm telling you. Satan is real. Satan is super real. And I want you to tell you the second thing that you need to know is that he's not haphazard, but he's timely.

Let me tell you the third one. Number three that you need to know is the enemy's not creative, but boy is he crafty. He's not creative, but boy is he crafty. He's going to tempt you the same way he tempted Jesus. It's where you fall. It's where I've fallen it. It's where we all fall when we're not paying attention to what God wants. Now, here's why we know he's not creative. In 2 Corinthians 1:11, we read this. 2 Corinthians 1:11. It says it like this, "So that no advantage will be taken of us by Satan for we are not

ignorant of his schemes." You don't have to be ignorant of what Satan's going to do. Well, how's he going to get to me? I'm going to tell you exactly how he's going to get to you.

It will come as absolutely no surprise. You will see this in your life, but let's look at the text. So verse three, it says, "The tempter came and said, if you are the son of God, command these stones to become bread." Really interesting here. Satan is a punk. He likes to taunt. God just got done at the end of chapter three saying, "This is my beloved son." Satan already knew Jesus was God's son. God spoke it, so Satan's heard it. And what's he coming to say? "Well, if you really are the son of God, and we're not so certain that you are." What's he doing? He's baiting him. It's what he did with our first parents, Adam and Even in the garden. He always comes to bait. "If you really are the son of God, command these sons to become bread." And Jesus, the first of three times answers with the word. He says, Deuteronomy 8:3.

He answered and said, "It is written man shall not live by bread alone, but from every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." In other words, he's like, "I'm not listening to your voice. I'm listening to God's voice." Your voice means nothing to me. God's voice means everything to me. If you want to beat the enemy, know the word of God. Store it up in your heart that you might not sin against him. Memorize it, meditate on it. Go to a church where the word is proclaimed and heralded. Study it. Write the word down. Go over it and over it. And most importantly, get to a place where you speak it. Speak the word. Speaking the word is different than, "Yes, I know the word. I

speak the word." Speak it in those situations. Speak it out loud. The spoken word of God is kryptonite to Satan. He cannot handle it for very long. He will flee. The Bible says resist the devil and he will flee from you.

We'll keep going through this and we'll highlight them. The second way he take, and notice what he does next. Then the devil took him into the holy city and had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, which is the edge of Solomon's portico. If we study this, it's the southeast side of the temple. And he said to him, "If you are the son of God, like we're not so sure yet either, throw yourself down for it is written." And he's going to quote the Bible. Did you know Satan can quote the Bible? Do you know Satan knows the Bible? That's why we have to know the Bible, because he'll take it out of context.

He quotes Psalm 91:11 and 12, and he says this, "He will command his angels concerning you, and on their hands they will bury you up so that you will not strike your foot against the stone." Jesus said, "On the other hand," he quotes Deuteronomy 6:16, "it is written, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test." Did you know Satan uses scripture to get you off course? He uses scripture to discourage you. He gets you scripture to put God to the test. I remember when I was single and I was young and I was new in my faith, it was interesting.

I'd always open up to 1 Corinthians seven and read that it's good for a man not to touch a woman. It's good for a man to not be married. And Satan would be like, "See, you're going to follow God. You're going to be celibate for the rest of your life." That's what he would tell me. And then I would get totally discouraged and I'd be mad

and I'd be like, "God, I do not want to be a priest. I love you, but I don't want to be a priest."

But that's what he did. He lied. Because I didn't know all the other scriptures. Be fruitful and multiply. He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord. That it's a choice that you can do. I mean, he'll take a scripture and he'll put it in your head, but he'll twist it and use it in a way that God never intended to use the scripture. He knows the word. So anytime when you're reading the word of the Lord and you're discouraged in your obedience because you don't think it's for your good, there's a strong possibility Satan's been all over that lying to you about what that verse actually means. I find that the word of God is powerful and good and refreshing and washing and that no good thing will he withhold from those who walk up rightly.

God is not up in heaven saying, "I'm going to make your life miserable so that you'll serve me." God's the one who's lavish. God's the one that's good. Satan is the stealer. Satan's the one that wants to kill, steal, and destroy. So first he has him try to make bread because he has a hunger problem. Second is to go to the top of the temple and prove that he's God. Notice this third one. Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to him, "All these things I will give you if you fall down and worship me." Isn't it irony that Jesus owns all the kingdoms in the world? Isn't it ironic that after he rises from the dead, he says, "All authority and heaven on earth has been given to me?" And yet what's the shortcut?

The shortcut is this. Satan says, "Give me your allegiance, I'll give you everything this world has to offer. Don't live for the next life. Don't live for the coming kingdom. Don't live for the true God, live for me. Give me your worship and I'll give you everything you want." Now, he won't do that because he's a liar, but that's what he promises Jesus. And for the third time, Jesus is going to rebuke him. How? With the word, the spoken word. In Ephesians 6, where we put on the full armor of God, the sword of the Spirit is the spoken word of God. Speak the word. He quotes Deuteronomy 6:13. Deuteronomy 10:20 says the same thing. He says, "Go Satan, for it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only, and then the devil left him and behold angels came to minister to him."

Now, let's take a look at these, because for most of us during the fast, I wasn't tempted to turn stones to bread. I don't have that ability. I wasn't tempted to throw myself from a high building to prove that the God I served is real or that I'm something special. I wasn't tempted to say, "Well, all the kingdoms of the world could be mine." That never even crossed my mind for any of this. So how does this even apply? First of all, it applies that Jesus is the one and only person that's been tempted in every way we are yet without sin. He's the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, but let's unpack these just a little further. What was the first area that Satan went after? He was hungry, so he told him to eat. It's called the lust of the flesh.

Satan always goes after the flesh. The flesh means this, it's your appetite for comfort. Anybody ever struggled with that before? It's the promise of comfort for you. If you're watching television this afternoon and you watch commercials, I promise you

90% of them will all appeal to your flesh. All about your comfort, all about your benefit, all about making your life easier, all about what you can have, how short of a time you can have it in, and how blessed your life's going to be, because we're here for you. That is what Satan does. He tempts us with our flesh. Right? He shows you this is going to be great for you. This is going to be so fulfilling. What he doesn't show you is how empty and miserable it's going to be. That's what he does. He tempts you by trying to fulfill something God may have for you in an ungodly way.

Is it wrong for Jesus to eat bread? No, but he doesn't need to respond to Satan and do it in his way, he can allow his Father who can provide everything according to his needs. Single people, listen to me. If you have a desire to fulfill your sexuality, God has an answer for how you should do that. It's called marriage. That's his container. God is not up in heaven telling singles sex is bad, sex is dirty, sex is no good. Here's what God says. "I created sex. I think it's great. It's so good. It's so powerful. It's so bonding. It's so connective that the only container that can house the beauty of everything that I designed is in marriage between a husband and a wife, a man and a woman. Anything that falls shy of that will be a perversion and leave you feeling empty."

So God's not withholding from you, god's just saying, "My way's better, my way's better." God's not withholding food. God's able to provide. God's not withholding money, he's able to provide. What we do is we think, "Well, I'll cut corners here. I'll do this because this is going to help me. I can get this now. I can fill this now. I need this

now." That's the flesh. The flesh says, "I need it now." My wife tells the story when our youngest was in the grocery store when she was three years old. My wife got to the counter and started paying for all the groceries and she noticed all this candy that was in there. My youngest, who was three at the time, was eating something. She looked at her and said, "What are you doing?" And she was like, "I want what I want when I want it." That's the flesh. Right? And we don't outgrow that. There's something in us that wants what we want when we want it. That's the flesh. Satan appeals and says, "You need this, but you need it now. Take shortcuts to fulfill yourself."

Second is this, if he can't get you with the lust of the flesh, he'll get you with the pride of life. Pride is the second one. If flesh is your appetite for comfort, pride is your appetite to prove your greatness. Pride is your appetite to prove your greatness. Pride is your appetite to show that you're somebody. It can be name dropping, it can be resume building, it can be doing something in front of others, all so that others can see how great you are. When he takes Jesus to the high place of the temple on Solomon's portico and has him throw it down, he's doing this to say, "Why don't you just prove yourself? I mean, if you really are God, you better prove yourself."

The reality is, if you are something, you don't need to prove yourself. I'm a man. I don't need to prove myself. I'm married. I don't need to prove myself. I have children. I don't need to prove myself. I already know who I am. I'm content in that. It's when we have to prove who we are or we get in conversations where we hear other people have done it better and we feel that prompting inside of us. "Well, you better show them what you've done, too. You better prove that you're somebody." You don't need

to do that. Nobody cares anyway. Am I telling the truth. Right? I don't care about somebody else's resume anymore than they care about mine. Nobody cares. But it's that pride of life to prove that we are something, and we do it all the time.

Parents, you can do it when you drop your kids off at school so that you can posture yourself or you live in a certain neighborhood, so people think this, or you drive a certain car, so that people will think that, or you hang out with a certain group of people, so people will think. All of that stuff is pride. It's the root of all sin. It's showing I'm going to prove to people I'm I'm special. It's you trying to be God, and that's not his design for us. So he'll go after the flesh, he'll go after our pride. And the way he does that sometimes is he'll make us feel insecure so we have to prove ourselves.

And then other times he'll make us feel like we're better than everybody else so that we don't have to. Isn't it strange how he works that way? Because even as I'm talking to you, somebody like, "Well, I'm not one of those needy people that have to prove myself. I mean, I've got the perfect life and the perfect job and the perfect spouse and the perfect this." I'm like, "Yeah, that's your pride." I mean, we can't escape this thing. Insecurity and pride, they're tied to a string. They're just cousins that pull either way. All right?

Then the third that he appeals to, if flesh is the appetite for comfort and pride is the appetite that proves your greatness, then your eyes are the third, and the eyes are your appetite for what you can gain, what you can have. Jesus took him to see all the kingdoms of the world and said, "You bow and a worship me, I'll give you all this. Here's what you can have." Eyes are the coveting thing. Like, "Look what I could have.

I mean, I could have this. I can get that. I can go after that." And we spend our whole life going after things that don't put God at the center of our life.

We can covet what everybody else has. We want stuff. We want to do things our way. We want to go a certain way. We want to know this life is about me. Isn't it interesting that all throughout the Bible, every part of the biblical account says this is what the world's system looks like. In 1 John 2, starting in verse 15, it says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Now, he's not talking about earth and the planet we live on, that he created, that belongs to him, that we're not called to love people and love the planet.

He's talking about the world's system that goes after the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, and the lust of the eyes. Don't love that. If you do that, you're not loving what I created you to love. The love of me is not in you. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.

Now, you want to think back to our history as human beings, that God created this perfect world in six days. He created it just right. He set it up perfect. Adam and Eve had everything they wanted, not only to sustain themselves, but very God in their presence all the time. I mean, can you imagine what that would be like? One day we're going to get to see what it's like. I mean, it's amazing, and yet, what do we see in Genesis 3? The enemy comes in and how does he tempt him?

He tempts him with the lust of the flesh, he tempts him with the lust of the eyes, and he tempts them with the pride of life. Remember how this goes? He says this. They look at each other and say, "Ah, this would be good for food." They could eat off any tree they wanted to in the garden, any tree in the planet. But Satan says, "God won't let you eat off that one? If you eat off that one, you're going to know both good and evil. You'll be like a God. I can't believe he's holding out on you like that." And what did they see? They saw that it looked good for food. That's the flesh. Well, we're standing by this tree. Why should I have to go down to that orchard and pick another apple? I'll just eat this one. This one looks really good.

Isn't it extreme when God tells you no, that's what looks really good to you. Isn't it? You're dating someone and God says no, and you're like, "If I let this go, well, who am I going to have? Because they look really good to you." "Well, if I don't take this job, even though I know it's not perfect for me, then what job's coming?" I mean, taking steps of faith require not taking the immediate thing all the time, right? They thought it was good for food. They said it was pleasing to the eye. In other words, it looks good. What can be so wrong about that? And then what, they had the pride of life. It was desirable for gaining wisdom. We'll be like God. We'll know both good and evil. All we know now is just good. This is awful. Can you imagine a world where all we knew was good?

Every day you woke up, you only knew how to honor God and love other people, and everybody you ran into only knew how to honor God and love you? Can you imagine that world? That's not a bad world. That's a good world. God made it so, but

how does he tempt them? Flesh, eyes, and pride, and they both eat and sin enters into the world. Every single human being up until the time of Jesus and after has fallen for the same three tricks. No sin has seized you except what is common demand is what one Corinthians 10:13 says, "And God will always provide a way out." You know what that means? Those of you that are saying, "I'm being tempted in this way. I'm probably the only one at Brave being tempted this way." Let me tell you something on the authority of God's word. With a church our size, guarantee 300 other people here, if they were honest with their thoughts, are being tempted in the exact same way you're being tempted.

You're not so special that Satan can design a unique strategy for you. He's not that creative. He just appeals to the area he can get to, whether it's your pride, your flesh, or your eyes, so that you take your focus off Jesus, your heart off Jesus, your mind off Jesus, and put it on yourself, and then you engage in sin. That's what's going on. And all of us fall prey to that. All of us fall prey to that.

But here's the good news. Here's the good news. When you get to a place where you realize you're dead in your transgressions and sins and you need a Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and you turn from your sin through repentance and you place your faith in trust in him, that same Jesus comes to live inside of you through His Holy Spirit and what you did not have before you became a believer, you have now.

You have all authority and you have all power in Jesus' name to accomplish every good thing he's ever destined you to do. Which means you can never say, "Well, the

devil made me do it." No, you chose it. You like it. "I hate sin so much." Then why do you do it? You love it. You swim in it. You may hate the consequences of your sin, but you love indulging in it before you experience the consequences. What now we have in us is the living God, Jesus, to say, "I don't want that anymore. Lord, I want more of you. I want freedom. I want deliverance. I don't want bondage, I want health." And what the enemy does all the time is he lies to you about whatever condition you're in. You're always going to be poor because your mom and dad were poor and their parents were poor. You just come from poor genes. That's a lie. You're always going to be sick. Your mom and dad were sick. Their parents were sick. You come from a poor line of genes. That's a lie.

You know what? Whatever it is, it's a lie. Your marriage isn't going to work out, your parents didn't work out, their parents didn't work out, it's not going to work out for you. That's a lie. You're always going to be single. You'll never get married. You'll never meet someone that genuinely loves Jesus. It's a lie. He comes in and lies to you about the place that you're most vulnerable and tells you how miserable your life's going to be when Jesus is up in heaven saying, "You're mine and I love you, and I can break any addiction. I can break any curse. I can break any bondage, and would you continue to walk with me? And if you'll walk by faith and leave that garbage behind, I will free you. I will set you free. I will deliver you. I will give you hope and purpose." Amen?

Jeremiah 29:11 says it this way, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you. Plans for hope in a good future."

That's not just a bathroom plaque at your house. It's a word to be spoken by the living God over your life that you're that special to him. And the more you speak the word out loud and the more you speak it in your prayers out loud, the more you'll hear the lie and be like, "That's not true of me. That may be who I used to be. That may be in my flesh if I'm not listening to Jesus, but I'm done not doing that. I want to grow with him." He's not creative, but he is crafty. He's looking around, prowling around like a lion looking for someone to devour. It doesn't mean he prowls every second.

He just kind of waits his opportune time, just kind of waits and waits and waits until he is like, "Now I got you." Right? That's why it's so important for us to stay in the word and stay connected and all those different things. But let me give you the most glorious truth of this that you're going to take home with you. Even if you don't remember anything else, I mean, believe that the Devil's real. Believe that he's timely, believe that he's crafty. But notice this. Number four, the enemy is not a champion who wins, but he's already a defeated enemy. Amen he's not a champion who wins. He's already a defeated enemy. It's not this battle and one day Jesus is going to win. He already won. He defeated him at the cross. He made a public display of Satan by dying on the cross and shedding his blood saying, "I have all authority. I have all power. I've forgiven all sins."

And he rose from the dead validating that he was indeed the son of God, and now he offers life to everyone who calls upon him through repentance and faith. When Jesus three times tells him to, "Go, and quotes the word, what Satan do? He flees. He can't handle the spoken word of God from a group of people that actually believe it,

from an individual that says, "This is who I am." From an individual that keeps speaking the word of God even when they don't see with their eyes what God's going to do. Don't be surprised by the power of God. Don't be surprised by the power of God. Don't be surprised by the power of his word. The kingdom of God is not repackaged religion, it's a demonstration of God's power. You didn't become a Christian, because I've heard people say stuff like this.

"Before, I was a Christian, my life was so good. Now I'm a Christian, I struggle all the time." And guys, listen to me, because it's garbage. Because we'll talk to guys that before they came to Christ, they didn't struggle with porn, they swam in it, and then they come to Christ, and now they struggle with porn because they see God wants them to be pure, but they say, "I can't get there." And then other brothers in the face say stuff like this. "Yeah, that's going to be a struggle you have for the rest of your life." Well, what the heck kind of hope is that? It was better than as a non-believer when I didn't even have to think about it. Here's what I would tell you. I would tell you this. Yeah, prior to coming to Christ, I struggled with that too. After Christ, I can tell you this, God can 100% completely redeem any heart and make it totally pure so you have no desire for that anymore if you walk with him.

Alcohol and drugs don't have you. Immorality doesn't have you. Bad habits don't have you. Being poor doesn't have you. Being sick doesn't have you. The enemy will lie and tell you, "I have all authority, all power. You're going to die." That's what he does. "You're always going to be sick." That's a lie. That's what he does. "You're never going to get well." He's a liar. That's what he does. You're always going to be in bondage."

He's a liar. That's what he does. He says this, "If you abide in me and my word abides in you, ask whatever you wish it will be done for you." Where the spirit of the Lord, there is freedom. There is liberty. The one who the sun sets free is free, indeed. You don't need to listen to the lie anymore. His only superpower is speaking lies. The way you end his power is to shut your ears to it by receiving so much of the truth of God's word that that doesn't have any appeal for you anymore.

God can take you from where you are. There are more steps that you can take than you even realize. And Jesus has done this from the time of his earthly ministry until now. That's why I love pastoring a church like Brave. I've watched people get set free from all sorts of myriads of addictions in our church. I've watched God heal relationships in our church. I've watched God heal illness in our church. I've watched God deliver people from demonic influence in our church. Here's all I'm saying, you're not doomed. If you're a Christian, I can promise you this, your best days are ahead. And if you're not a believer, why wouldn't you make today the day that you turn from your sins and trust Jesus Christ?

We had a great day here at Brave. Between our two campuses, we're going to baptize about 50 people today. Amen?

Each one of those represents a new life in Christ that at one time was walking in deadness and now they're alive. They've been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved son in whom they have redemption and the forgiveness of sins. And God wants to use them for great things, the same way he

wants to use you. And here's the beauty of this, if you're not a Christian, make today your day, and if you are a Christian, I got good news for you. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but through the precious blood of Jesus, you can start fresh wherever you are, right here, right now, and say, today it ends. Satan, I belong to Jesus. I'm listening to him. You keep taking steps forward and God will take you to places you couldn't even dream because he loves you and he wants to pour his life in and through you. Amen?

I'm going to pray and then afterwards we'll have some of the pastors come up on each campus and lead us through these baptisms and we'll celebrate together. Father in heaven, thank you for who you are. God, we give you all the glory, honor, and praise. Lord, thank you for reminding us of our enemy, while he's crafty and he's real and all those different things, he's a loser. He's already been defeated. He's a liar. That's all he knows how to speak. But Lord, we have the truth. You are the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father, except through you. If you're here today and you've never trusted in Jesus, make this your prayer. Jesus, I need you. I repented of my sins, I want to turn from them, and I confess you as my Lord and Savior. Come live in me.

Lord, fill them with your Holy Spirit that prayed that. And then for all of those today who know the Lord, who have been steeped in sin or keep having the same pattern of sin or something over and over, Lord, let them feel the fresh washing of your blood to purify them from all and righteousness. And Lord, let us walk out of here today as new creations in Christ because of what you've done on our behalf, knowing

that all authority and all power resides in us through Jesus Christ.

God, we give you praise today for these baptisms. We honor you as we watch this video. Lord, may we be moved that you are still at work in and through your church, in Jesus' name, amen.