



Message **Transcript**

The Danger of Spiritual Lethargy

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Father in Heaven we give you all the praise for all you're doing in and through our church. Father, you love your church. And Lord, we praise you, we give you all the credit. We give you all glory, all honor, and all praise for who you are and for all you're going to do. And Lord, this morning, I pray you'd be helpful to me and helpful to us as we listen to your word. Lord, help me to be faithful and accurate in the way that I proclaim your word and would allow your holy spirit to magnify the resurrected Christ. God, do a work in each one of our hearts that we would respond to you by faith in the way in which you show us today for your great name. So now for all those who are gathered here, who desire to hear the word of the Lord, expect God to speak directly to you and will by put into practice what he shows you. Will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word, amen.

Amen.

Amen. Sometimes when things are physically wrong with us, we go to the doctor to get a diagnosis. And sometimes when that diagnosis comes back, we don't like the diagnosis that they give us and sometimes we go get a second opinion. But even when we get a second opinion, if that diagnosis is right, it's still right with the second opinion that we get. And sometimes these diagnoses are challenging to us. We don't like what they have to say. Sometimes they trouble us. Sometimes they hurt us at our core. One of the diagnosis that's one of the most difficult is when a mother has a baby in utero and you get the diagnosis, "Hey, things aren't developing well." The brain of this child is not developing the way a normal brain develops or the kidney function is not developing the way a normal kidney functions or the arms and the legs here, they're

not developing in the right way.

And we begin to ask questions. Well, what does that mean? It means your child's going to be different, it means they're not going to be able to think the same way as normal kids, or they're not going to be able to walk the same way as normal kids. And we weep and we cry because we say that's not right. They should be able to progress and move on. A bigger tragedy even than that is when that happens spiritually. For those who have come to know the Lord, Jesus Christ as a personal Lord and savior, it is normal that you will grow in the faith. It is normal that you will bear fruit. It is normal that you will grow and have a harvest in your life. It doesn't mean that from the time that you're saved and until you meet Jesus, that everything's just been steady growth, it's been awesome.

All of us have those places in our lives whereas we've grown we've kind of tripped up here and there and we've had people come along and encourage us. But over time, if you study the life of a believer, you'll see that they are growing in their faith. The challenge becomes what about people that have made professions of faith that as the weeks, months and years progress, nothing really changes? How come it is that they are stunted in their spiritual growth? Sometimes the way people answer that question is, "Well, they're just not one of those special Christians yet. They need to get their act right? Or they need to practice these spiritual disciplines a little bit better, and then they'll get there." But the Bible wants to point out something different. The Bible wants to diagnose spiritual lethargy in the life of a congregation and say, "Hey, if you're

not growing in your faith, that's abnormal and there's a reason why that is." And that's what we're going to talk about today.

I invite you to open up your Bibles to Hebrews chapter five. We're going to begin in verse 11 today and go through chapter six and verse eight because all of this scripture is connected. And as we're turning there, let me give you the context because it's going to be super important to our discussion today. The context of this entire book of Hebrews is that Jesus is the greatest of all time, that he is superior to anyone. He is a superior prophet, he is a superior king, he is superior to angels, he's superior to Moses. Last time we were in this book, we talked about how he's the superior high priest. That there's no one like him. And because he's superior, we can come to him and find mercy and grace in our time of need.

And as we begin to talk about how Jesus is from a different priestly order, the priestly order of Melchizedek, which we'll get to in chapter seven. The writer pauses because he wants to diagnose the spiritual lethargy of someone within that body of people. And here's what he begins to say. He says, concerning him, we have much to say, and it is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need to have again someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God. And you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who pears only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness free as an infant, but solid food is for the mature who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil, therefore leaving the elementary teaching about Christ.

Let us press onto maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead that works and a faith towards God of instruction about washings and laying on of hands and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the holy spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucified themselves, the son of God and put them to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those whose sake it is also tilled receives a blessing from God. But if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed and it ends up being burned.

And here this author of Hebrews, who is a Hebrew, who is writing to Hebrews is giving us the danger signs of spiritual lethargy and four ways to diagnose spiritual lethargy in your own heart. I'll tell you from the outset that this passage, especially when we get to Hebrews 6:4, may be the most controversial passage in the entire Bible. For sure, in the New Testament, there are many different people who are godly men and women who interpret this in certain ways. And it's worthy of a study. I'm doing my best to present to you the word of God the way that I understand it in context and I hope that it makes sense this morning, but as I've told you from the time I started this church, I care way more about what the word says, not what my interpretation of the word is. Amen. So feel free to study this for yourself and come to your own conclusions but no matter how you understand this passage, we're going to see how

spiritual lethargy creeps into a community of people and the dangers that that brings.

And notice what he says. The first way to diagnose spiritual lethargy is this, that spiritual lethargy suppresses spiritual appetites and the ability to discern both good and evil. Spiritual energy will suppress a spiritual appetite and the ability to discern good and evil. Notice what he says. He says concerning him, talking about how Jesus is of the high priesthood of Melchizedek. He's like, "I don't want to tell you about Melchizedek. And I'll get to that." But he says, "We have much to say, and it's hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing." Dull of hearing literally means complacent. It means you hear the words, but you're not applying them to your life. Remember when Jesus would tell a story or a parable, we would see him say these words at the end, he who has ears let him hear. He wasn't talking about physical ears, he was saying, are you listening to the spiritual truths that I'm presenting? Are you willing to apply the things that I'm telling you about?

He wasn't just saying, did you hear what I said? He was saying, are you willing to apply the spiritual truths that you're hearing? And he was telling this congregation of people, these Jews who were at the point of following Christ and leaving behind their Jewish religious system, "Hey, I want to tell you something, there's a lot I could tell you, but I can't go on." Because for some of you here, you're complacent. You're apathetic, you're not growing. It would be for those who come to Brave Church for instance, who you come week after week, month after month, maybe even year after year. But you find that while you enjoy the sermons and you enjoy worship, not much changes in your personal life on Monday through Saturday. You're pretty much the

same person you've always been. There's not a hunger for Jesus, there's not a hunger for the word. There's not a desire for prayer. There's not a desire for worship.

There's not a desire for fellowship with other believers like you see in others. And you begin to explain that away by saying, "Well, I'm just not one of 'those Christians.' I'm not that I'm not a serious Christian." Now what the Bible would point out is perhaps you're not a Christian. That's what he's saying. When your spiritual appetite is suppressed and your ability to discern good and evil, it's a sign that perhaps you're not saved. Notice what he says. Verse 12. For though by this time you ought to be teachers you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God. And you have come to need milk and not solid food. He says, by this time you ought to be teachers yourselves. In other words, by this time you've heard enough information about God's word, you've heard it from the apostles, you've seen them do different things. And by this time you ought to be able to live out what we're talking about. That's what he's saying.

Remember when GS gave the great commission? Matthew chapter 28, verse 18 to 20. He said, all of authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, therefore, what? Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and what? Teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you and, lo, I'll with you always till the end of the age. Well, not everybody in the body of Christ has the gift of teaching, everybody in the body of Christ teaches. That's what we do. So, it means if you're a husband and you still may not have the gift of teaching, but if you're a husband and you're walking after the Lord, you should be

able to train guys under you how to be a godly husband.

If you're a wife and you don't have the gift of teaching, you should still be able to what it means to be a godly wife. If you're a single, you may not have the gift of teaching, but you should be able to teach what it looks like to walk with the Lord in integrity as a single. If you're a Christian, you should be able to talk to people about here's what it looks like to steward resources and here's what it means to give to the Lord generously, to tithe. Here's what that looks like. I don't have the gift of teaching, but I know the Lord know what he expects. And he's telling this group of people, "Hey, by this time you should be teaching people the things that you're already applying to your life, but you want to go back to the elementary things." We're still playing ABCs and count to 10. You want to go back to there. You need somebody to teach you the elementary principles again. And while it's good to be refreshed in the foundations of the faith, that's not what he's talking about here.

He's talking about a group of people who have been spiritually stunted in their growth and are not growing and are comfortable with not growing. Do you know there're some people within a community of believers, they're comfortable saying, "I don't care if I ever grow or not. What difference does it make? I don't care?" That's who he's addressing here. And notice what he's says. He says, "You come to need milk and not solid food." Why is that a big deal? He says for everyone who pars only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness because he is an infant, but solid food is for the mature who because of practice have their senses trained to discern

good and evil. Is there anything wrong with drinking milk? Some of you are lactose intolerant, you can say yes, but that's not the point of the passage. The point of the passage is this, when a child comes out and is nursing or better yet is taking a bottle.

I remember feeding all three of my kids with a bottle when they were young. I remember feeding my son with a bottle. And when you have a little infant in your arms and you're holding, there's something special about that time. You're looking at this child and you're saying, "Wow, this child's so dependent. And God gave this child to me, he gave this child to us. This is our child." And there's something special about that when they're infants. But if that son grows up and he has to part his beard to put the bottle in his mouth, it's not so cool anymore. That's what he's talking about here. Paul said, "When I was a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child, I spoke like a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish ways." There's nothing wrong with starting out as an infant in the faith. We all start out as babies in Christ. There's nothing wrong with that. That's a good thing.

But if you've been a Christian for weeks, months, even years and nothing ever changes, and you're still going back to the elementary principles of the gospel and saying, "Yeah, I just like the ABCs. That's all I like to talk about." There's a problem. Because I can tell you as a grown man, I like milk, but I prefer a steak [inaudible 00:12:33].

Exactly.

Right? And that's what he's talking about here. And he's saying the reason that

you can't eat steak is the same reason an infant can't eat steak because they're not trained in it. And eating meat is the word of righteousness. It's learning what that is. So not only is your appetite suppressed, but you don't know how to discern both good and evil. Notice what he says. He says, but solid food is for the mature who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good evil. In other words, when you hear the word of God, he wants you to do what? Put it into practice. Some of you have told me, "Hey, Jeff, you have that same wrote prayer you pray before every sermon." I'm like, "Yeah, because I will want know that you want to hear God's word, believe what he says and you will by faith put into practice what he shows you."

Because I know you can hear the word all you want, but if you don't practice it, you're no better. Right? The reason professional sports teams and college sports team, the reason they practice is because they want to get better. They want to get better at what they do. They don't say, "Well, we'll show up on the weekend." They practice. Spiritually we have to practice. When you hear the word, are you putting it into practice? That's what he's asking. And when you put the word into practice, you begin to do what? You begin to discern both good and evil. You begin to get a sense of, I know the difference in this world between what's right and wrong. And I see it with my own two eyes. And I discern it with my spirit. One of the ways you know that you're growing in the faith, is you begin to discern good and evil. Right? The reason some people aren't able to do that is simply because they're not saved.

And first Corinthians chapter two and verse 14, he says this, but a natural man, that's speaking of an unsaved person, does not accept the things of the spirit of God

for their foolishness to him. And he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised. It means this, that a non-Christian can hear the same words that you as a Christian are hearing this morning, but they don't get it. They kind of understand maybe after a sermon, they would come up and say, "Pastor, that was a good speech. I like the talk. I like the stories, that made sense." But somebody who's a believer is hearing the spiritual truths, they're seeing the Lord convict their heart. They're desiring to change and become conformed to the image of Jesus. And as you're conformed to the image of Jesus by putting your faith into practice, the more you practice your faith, the more you'll be able to discern good and evil. You'll see it in our culture.

Did you know our culture's filled with good and evil? I mean it is. And it's interesting in our culture. I think Isaiah five talks about our culture today, as it has in many generations. Isaiah five 20 says this. Woe to those who call evil good and good evil. Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who call good evil and who call evil good.

Amen.

One of the jobs as a man of God to proclaim the word of God is to be able to discern between what is good and evil. And when you see evil, you call it evil.

Amen.

Some people in our culture don't know when life begins. So I'll just tell you. It begins at conception.

Amen.

Which means that abortion is wrong. It's sinful, it's murder.

Yes it is.

It's not hard to figure out if you're spiritually discerning. So, when there's a bill that's laid on the table so that you can only abort a baby in utero, but 28 days after delivery, that's called evil.

Amen.

And we're not called to stand on the sidelines, we're called to get involved.

There you go. Oh, yes.

You can't watch evil go on in a culture and not call it that. Or when an administration endorses youth sex change operations by having puberty blockers. When Genesis one says there's only two genders.

Amen.

And Psalm 139 says whatever gender you are created, that's what God wants you to be and that's what you will always be.

Amen.

And some people... Amen. Now the spiritually young and the unsaved will say, "Oh, you're just being political. No, I'm discerning between what's good and what's evil and I'm calling it that.

Amen.

Some will say, "Hey, you're just being political. You're trying to preach the gospel and save America." No, I'm not. My goal is not to save America, my goal is to preach the gospel and save Americans.

Amen.

And there's a lot of Americans that aren't saved that are in positions of office and authority that are making evil decisions and God says, woe to them. And for me to stand here and say, "Well, that's okay. That's just their job." It's not their job. It's God's job. They should repent and trust Christ and do it God's way. Amen.

Amen.

That's what he's talking about here. That's what he's talking about here. And if that bothers you to hear stuff said like that, perhaps you're spiritually immature. That could be, or perhaps you're just not saved. And you're bothered by the fact because that doesn't make sense to you. But the longer that you're in the word and the more you allow the Lord to penetrate your heart, and the more you put the word of God into practice, it's the word of righteousness. It's the hunger for righteousness. It's the hunger for God to have his way, not only in the church, but in the culture that you're passionate about. One way to discern and diagnose spiritual lethargy is when you live your life and your appetite for the Lord is suppressed. No hunger for God, no hunger for the word, no hunger for prayer, no hunger for anything and you can't discern between good and evil.

And can I just tell you this, for those of you that come to Brave Church on a

regular basis, we're a church that will open up the Bible and preach it word by word, line by line, precept upon precept. When you get a steady diet of that and then you go somewhere that doesn't do that, you will be fundamentally bothered. It will bother you. If people are tickling your ears and entertaining you and you can tell they don't really know Jesus, you'd be like, "Why did I even come?" Because you have a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Tell me what God's saying. Right? And that's what we're talking about here. He's telling us that there are some within the community, not everyone, but some within the community that want milk and not spiritual food, because they really aren't saved to begin with. They don't have a palette for the things of God, because they're not of God.

Second way to diagnose spiritual lethargy is this. Spiritual lethargy preferences religious practices as opposed to a personal relationship. Spiritual lethargy preferences religious practices to a personal relationship. People that aren't saved like to talk about religion, they like to talk about the rhetoric that happens in a church. They like to talk about the routines they have. They like to talk about the preaching. They like to talk about the practices. They like to talk about their promises that they're going to make. They all like to talk about outside external things. But what they don't talk about is their personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you're not saved, that's all you know how to talk about. You talk about the church you go to, whether you like your pastor or not, the worship songs that were sung, whether you like the way the worship songs were sung or. How the instruments were tuned, how they weren't tuned, what instrument was missing.

All that kind of stuff. But what you don't talk about is, "Here's what Jesus is doing in my life right now. And I have a relationship with the father through him and I know him." And notice what he says. He says, therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let press onto maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. He's like, therefore what? Therefore, since Jesus is the greatest of all time. Therefore, since he's greater than our Jewish traditions and pastimes. Therefore, since he's the greatest, let us leave the elementary teaching about the Christ. What's the elementary teaching about the Christ? The elementary teaching about the Messiah is that the Messiah was going to come. All the old Testament, scriptures are types and shadows of everything that the Messiah was going to be.

They were fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus. He doesn't say, forget the past. He says, let's leave that stuff because that was a foundation that's being built for what's most important, which is Christ. How would I translate it in modern day? It means this. Some of you grew up in the church. Some of you are Baptists, some of you are Pentecostal, some of you are Lutheran, Catholic, whatever. I'm not saying that's bad. I'm saying in light of who Christ is, let's leave all that behind and pursue Christ with everything you have.

Amen.

Let's not be about your denomination, let's be about Jesus. That's what he's

saying. And there're some people within the community who're like, "Yeah, we don't want to leave the Judaism thing, we want to be Jewish. We want to keep our practices. We're not as excited about Jesus as we are about being Jewish." There're some today that aren't as excited about Jesus as they're about being Catholic or as excited as Jesus as they are about being Methodist or as excited about Jesus as they are being Lutheran or as excited about Jesus as being non-denominational. Our people in our, in our stream like, "We're non-denominational, we're not any you that stuff." Well, what are you? "Well, we play contemporary music and our pastor doesn't wear a robe and we're really cool." But they don't talk about Jesus. It's Jesus. It's leaving those things. The elementary teachings were the Old Testament oracles of God, leading to Jesus.

And he says, let us press onto maturity. That's completeness. That's... What's maturity? Maturity's knowing the Lord. Let us press onto Jesus Christ being Lord, let us press on him being Lord of our life. Let us press on him having opportunity to take over any area of our life that he wants. Let's press on that. Let's submit to him. When you meet people, regardless of their denominational flavor and they'll tell you this, "Jesus Christ is Lord of my life and I repented of my sin and I turn to him and he's my God." It covers over a lot. Right? That's what it's all about. That's what he's talking about here. It's not about the tradition. It's about Jesus. Some of you grew up in a church like I did with a big pipe organ behind where people would stay after the service to listen to somebody that was a phenomenal organist play that song. People in our church would stay there and weep tears. If you come to Brave Church, I have it on

pretty good authority that's probably never going to happen here. Okay?

But there's nothing wrong with that. Right? Perhaps there's a room in Heaven for people that like organ music. Right? Perhaps there's a room in Heaven... I mean, God loves worship, but it's not about how we worship. It's who we worship.

Amen.

That we worship. Right? When you prefer religious practices to a personal relationship, when people ask you about your faith and you start talking about what you do rather than who you serve, that's a sign. Notice what else he talks about. He says repentance from dead works and towards faith in God... I mean, that's Old Testament stuff. All throughout the Old Testament, God was telling them, turn from your dead works, turn to God. Return to me, I'll return to you. That's elementary. That's foundational. And notice this. He's not talking about Christ here, he's talking about God in general. He was saying there was a principle in the Old Testament, we turn from our dead works, we turn to God. We got something greater than that right now, we can turn to the Lord, Jesus Christ himself. Amen.

Amen.

Or instruct about washings. This is not baptism. This is washings. Some of you... This is what it means for some of you. Some of you who have said that you're going to set out to study the Bible in a year and you make it to Leviticus. And then as you're reading Leviticus, why is all this stuff about washings? That's what he's talking about. There are all sorts of ways to be ceremonial cleaned. Remember were the Pharisees

in Jesus' day, they were coming up and asking him questions. "How come your disciples don't wash their hands?" And from our standpoint, it's who cares? But from them, it was a religious practice. They're not doing the right religious practices like we do. How come they don't do that? He's like, "Let's move on from that." We have the real thing now. We don't need to go back to our traditions that are pointing towards the real thing because the real thing, the Lord Jesus Christ has already arrived. Amen.

Amen.

He's like... Or the laying on of hands. This laying on of hands is not talking about New Testament laying on of hands apostolically imparting gifts, doing those kinds of things. This is a laying on of hands like the day of atonement, where the high priest praying for the sin of the nation would lay his hands on an animal, goat and pray the sin of the nation would be taken away. And that one would be slaughtered and he'd lay his hands on another one that was called the scape goat that he would release out into the wild that their sin would be taken away. He's like, "Let's get beyond that because the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world has already come." Let's get beyond our traditions is what he was saying. And the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. I mean, even the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day knew about the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. They just didn't know that Christ was the one that could do that for them.

He's saying let's get beyond our religious practices and get into a personal relationship with Christ. And notice what he says, verse three. And this we will do if God permits. In other words, it can be one or two things. One is, "Hey, if God permits,

I'll help get y'all there. I'll show you." Or it could mean if God permits, you'll get there. He's saying that for some of you need to go beyond your religious preferences or just your understanding of what God is about and actually appropriate the faith into your life. That's what it's all about. See some people like religion, they preference religion. Some people they come to church like, "Well, how do you know that Hinduism's wrong? Or how do you know that Islam's wrong? Or how do you know that Jehovah Witnesses are wrong? Or how do you know that Mormonism is wrong?" Very simply here's what my answer would be. Because I know Jesus Christ is right.

Yes.

And he's the way, the truth and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through him. And I know him personally, and I have a relationship with the Father through him and no one comes to the Father except through him. So, it doesn't matter what else is proclaimed that even if another gospel is proclaimed from an angel, I will not believe it because Jesus Christ is Lord. Amen.

Amen.

That's what he's talking about here. And for many of us, we like religious practices. It's easier for us to about, "Well, what do I need to do?" It's like the rich young ruler that comes to Jesus, "What do I need to do to get saved? Just tell me the religion I need. I need the right religion." He goes, "Tell me those things, then I'll kind of do those things and I'll get saved." And Jew was saying, "I'm the way, the only way you can be saved is to give up your life and to give your whole life to me. And then he

went away sad because he is like, "I prefer religion to a relationship with Jesus."

And there're some apparently, within the community of believers that prefer religion to a personal relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ. And he's pushing on that. He's pushing on that. He's like, "Do you understand? Do you understand why you're not growing spiritually? Do you understand why you're not hungry for God? Do you understand why you can't discern good from evil? Do you understand why you're bothered when people are worshiping? Do you understand why it threatens you when you watch people go after God wholeheartedly? Here's why, because you're really not saved. And I'm concerned about your condition. That's what he's saying. And then he goes on in verses four through six, which is the most controversial part of the entire New Testament. And he tells us that regardless of how you interpret this, that spiritual lethargy results in grave consequences. Spiritual lethargy results in grave consequences.

Now, notice what he says. For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the holy spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance since they again, crucified themselves, the Son of God and put them to open shame. Everybody understand? I think there's been more Christians troubled by this verse than any other verse in the Bible. And you don't need to. Now, there's great men and women in the history of the church who have gone before me, John Wesley would be one of them. I've studied much of what he preached and taught. Loved John Wesley,

but John Wesley taught this, that that's talking about believers who can lose their salvation. So if you're a believer and you've tasted all these things and done all these things and you turn away from the faith, it's impossible for you to ever come back.

So if you're going to teach that, you also need to teach that any believer that's turned their back on Christ, they can never come back. I find that hard to believe because it doesn't square with the rest of the teaching of the Bible. It just doesn't. So let me give you some comfort before we get into this text. Okay? God makes clear that salvation is not something that you earn, so it's not something that you can lose. Salvation is a gift. For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, is not your own doing. It's a gift of God. So no one can boast. And when God gives you a gift, he doesn't take the gift back.

Amen.

If you've repented and placed your faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Salvation is yours now and forever, you can't lose what God gave you. Let me give you some Bible verses to back that up so you don't think it's just my theology, I'm being biblical here. In John chapter 10 verse 27 to 29, here's what Jesus says. "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give eternal life to them and they will never perish. And no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all. And no one is able to snatch them out of my father's hand, I and my father are one." What is he saying? If you're saved, there's a double grip on you.

Yes.

The father and the son are holding you in their hand and nobody but nobody, not even the devil, not even yourself, not even your own stupid decisions can take away your salvation.

Amen.

You need to know that. Here's just a couple other verses, they're all over the New Testament. Philippians one six says that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ. What got started he's going to finish.

Yes.

What about in Romans chapter eight? Verse 31. If God is for us, who is against us? Verse 35 says who will separate us from the love of Christ? And verses 38 and 39 he says, for I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers nor height, nor depth, nor any other creative thing will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

Nothing can separate you from God's love. If you've trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you belong to Christ. It's Christ and you, the hope of glory. He's not going anywhere. Let me give you one more. Ephesians one 13 and of 14 says, in him you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed you were sealed in him with the holy spirit of promise,

who is given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of his glory. So not only do the father and son hold you, but the holy spirit has been given to as a deposit, guaranteeing your inheritance in the saints. Christian. If you've turned from your sin and Jesus Christ is your Lord, he's always going to be your Lord. You are not ever in peril of losing what God gave you in salvation. Is that good news?

Yeah.

So let's talk in context, because context is everything in the Bible. That's why sometimes people go through the Bible and they pick a verse here and they pick a verse there and they pick a verse here and they pick a verse there. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. That means somebody I can be a president, I can be the quarterback of the Broncos. I can be whatever I want through Christ who Jesus strengthens me. Well, that's not what that means. In context, I can be content no matter what I go through. That's true. If we don't look at context, we can come up with a very erroneous interpretation. I mean, imagine taking these three verses out of context. And Judas went out and hung himself. Friends do not be merely heroes of the word, but doers of the word. And Jesus said, what you do, do quickly.

I mean, that's butchering the Bible. That's pulling different scriptures out. And every cult in the world does that. We have to take it as a whole. So, what is the context here? The context here are Jewish people, some of which who have been converted, some in the community aren't and he's speaking to the ones in the

community that aren't and he's saying I'm scared about you. I'm scared about some of you that aren't maturing and the reason I'm scared about some of you that aren't maturing is because you're really not saved. And I want to make sure that you're saved. You've come all the way to the point of repentance, but you're not all the way there yet. So, let's read what he says. Let's let the text speak for itself. See if this makes sense. But he says, but each one... I'm sorry. He says this, "For, in the case of those who have once been enlightened..." What does it mean to be enlightened? Enlightened means you have a mental awareness. You become aware of something going on, but you haven't necessarily done anything with it.

If I told you to today that there's a sale at Park Meadows and everything in every store is 75% off, I would be enlightening you. But if you don't go to Park Meadows, you don't get to experience what I'm enlightening you about. By the way, if you go to Park Meadows, that's not true. It's not going to happen. But enlightening, they've been enlightened to of the truth. They've been made aware of the information. They've been made aware that Jesus is Lord. They've heard the apostles preach and teach. They know what Jesus said. They know who he is, but they haven't done anything with it. What else have they done? They've tasted of the heavenly gift. What's the heavenly gift? It's Christ for our salvation. They've tasted of it. Tasted does not mean fully embraced and eaten. Jesus tasted death for everybody. Hebrews 2:9 told us he tasted death for everyone. Is he still dead? He tasted death, he completely died, but he's not dead anymore. Death apart from crisis forever. Jesus had a taster. He tasted it, but he didn't endure it for all time.

I'll give you a passage of scripture that will back this in Matthew chapter 27 in verse 34 when Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross, it says, and they gave him wine to drink mixed with gall. And after tasting it, same word. He was unwilling to drink. Tasting does not mean swallowed, tasting does not mean fully embraced. It means they know they've been enlightened that Jesus is Lord. They've seen that Jesus is Lord. They've even had a little taste of the gospel. They've even had some experience in the community that the gospel's real, but they haven't done anything with it. What does it mean they've been made partakers of the Holy Spirit? It means this. They've experience the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit in community. That they've experienced him. The holy spirit brings conviction about sin and judgment and righteousness. The holy spirit prompts you in a service. When you're here today at Brave, you can experience the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit without being saved.

Some of you may say, "Well, I kind of like the preaching, or that song made me cry. Or man, when they said that today, that really resonated with my heart." They've experienced the Holy Spirit. Some at first Tuesday, last first Tuesday we had, I asked people, hey, raise your hands. If you've been physically healed since being here at Brave. About a third of the hands went up. And some people might say, "Wow, that's great, I've seen God heal people, watched him do great things." Been partakers with the Holy Spirit. Doesn't mean they're indwelled with the Holy Spirit. Doesn't mean they're filled with the Holy Spirit, but they've experienced the Holy Spirit. What else have they done? They've tasted of the good word. The good word is the spoken word.

Now, they've tasted of it. They like preaching. They like good preaching.

Man, that pastor who told a good story, I like that. I like good preaching.

Remember Herod, he even liked hearing John the baptist preach. Didn't always like what John the baptist had to say, he liked listening to him. There're some people that just like getting their ears tickled for the sake of getting him tickled. There're some people who like to be in church because it's a good moral thing to do and I kind of like what the pastor has to say, but that doesn't mean that because you hear the word and experience the spirit and know that Jesus is the way, that you have made Jesus Christ the Lord of your life. That's what he's saying. And notice what else he goes on to say. He goes, they've tasted the good word and the powers of the age to come. When we study the life of Jesus, we see not only saves, but he heals, he delivers. These people have seen all that. They've seen the apostles do all that.

They've watched people be delivered from demons. They've watched people get healed. They watch the apostles raise people from the dead. They've experienced all this, but you know what they haven't done? They haven't allowed Jesus Christ to be Lord. You know why? Because when you're spiritually lethargic, here's what you say. "Yeah, I know all that's good, but I got my life to live. I'm not giving my whole heart to Jesus. Maybe someday I'll give my whole heart to Jesus. I'm not ready for that kind of commitment yet. Oh, I'd like him to be my savior, I just don't want him to be my Lord." There's nowhere in the Bible where that plays out. Where somebody looks Jesus in the eye and say, "Hey, I want you to die for me, but I just want you to know I got a life to live that's different than what you're asking." And Jesus says, "Okay." It's not what he

says. He says, he puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of Heaven."

When the rich young ruler comes to him and walks away he says how hard it is for the rich to end the kingdom of Heaven. He points at people's and says, "I'm Lord. I need to be your Lord. And if I'm your Lord, I will save you." That's what's going on here. It means this at Brave Church, it means you can come to Brave Church and you can experience all the same things and still not be saved. Did you know that? You can come to Brave Church and you can like the preaching and you can like the worship, you can experience the manifest, power of the Holy Spirit. You taste of the heavenly gift and hear stories of people that are saved. You can be enlightened and made aware that Jesus Christ is Lord, and you must turn from your sin and make Jesus Christ Lord and still not be a Christian. Now, here's the danger. When you have all that experience, and notice what it says, and then fall away. And then fall away. It is what?

Impossible.

Impossible to renew them again to repentance since they again crucified to themselves, the Son of God and put him to open shame. Now, some people I've watched try to twist this text and say, "Well, impossible means really, really difficult." That's hard to understand when in Hebrew 6:18, it says it's impossible for God to lie. Is it really, really difficult for God to lie? But he does it sometimes. Or is it impossible for God to lie?

It's impossible.

It's impossible. So whoever this group of people is, and I'm making the case that these are unsaved people who have got to the precipice of giving their lives to Christ and then after they've had that entire experience, it's not that they leave the church, it's not that they change churches, it's not that they go through a season of difficulty. It's where they say, "I want nothing to do with Christ. I hate him. Get out of my face Jesus, I'm done with you." Here's what it says about people like that. It is impossible to renew them again to repentance because they crucified themselves, the Son of God all over again. It's impossible to get them back to a place where their heart would be soft enough to respond to the gospel.

Is that a warning or what? Now, this warning is for the people that hear, it's not for you to look at other people and say, "Oh yeah, that's you'll never come to Christ." No, no, no, no. We don't know because you know what? I have the same six sin stain flesh that you have and there's been times in my life where outwardly I've been hardened towards something, but inwardly I really want it. I've just been embarrassed or shamed. So, we can't look at somebody and say, "Oh, God will never take you back." That's what this text is teaching. This text is teaching the individual who is at the place of making a decision for Christ, but refuses to do it says, "Hey, be careful because you've had the experience and you know the truth and if you turn and harden your heart towards this, there will come a place where it's impossible for you to get back here."

Don't think that you can just come to Christ on your own terms anytime you want. So, all throughout this text, we've heard it three different times. Today if you hear the

Lord's voice, do not harden your heart because it will come a time where your heart will be hard and you won't be sensitive to the things of God. And what's the challenge with this? Well, a person like this, it can't be brought back to repentance because what they're saying publicly, and what they're saying in their heart is Jesus deserve to die crucify him I don't want him. They're putting him to open shame once again. I've had people ask me when I teach this text. "Hey, does that mean when I see somebody go wayward, I shouldn't pray for them anymore?" No, we're called to pray and never give up. The Bible says, the Lord knows those who are his. I don't know who's his, and who's not his.

I don't have the ability every single time to see exactly who's saved and who's not and what God's doing, I don't have that total ability. Jesus does. What we have the ability to do is pray for the lost. What we have the ability to do is comfort people who are wayward. What we have the ability to do is do everything we can to point them to Jesus. It's God's job to do the saving. Amen.

Amen.

But it is a warning passage and it's sobering. If this person here is a Christian that he's talking about, it means this, you would have to teach... Hey, Christian, here's what it means. You fall away from the faith you ain't ever coming back. Which would terrify me. I was at a seminary one time that taught this way. It was a Wesleyan seminary. And I raised my hand in class as I often did. And I said, if you really believe this is a denomination, how come nobody ever teaches it? I grew up in a Methodist

church, I was never scared of going to hell ever. And I said, "You really believe this?" He said, "Yeah, I believe this." I said, "Well, what would happen? Our seminary was right across the street from the college. I said, "Well, what would happen if I were crossing the street and I saw a girl crossing the street and I lusted in my mind about her, I was hit by a truck right then.

Would I go to hell?" And everybody started laughing. He said, "Well, I think the Lord would know that you were going to ask for forgiveness so you'd probably still go to Heaven." And I thought, what pathetic theology? Jesus Christ died on the cross to forgive me for all my sins. Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Jesus Christ is Lord. He gave me the gift of the gospel by his grace. I did nothing to earn it. I trusted in him for the forgiveness of my sins and he is mine for all eternity and I am his and no one can snatch me out of his hand. Amen.

Amen.

That's the gospel. That's why I believe here he is talking to someone who has had experience without the full measure of knowing Christ as Lord. And there's grave consequences. There's grave consequences. I mean, we see this all throughout the New Testament. First, John 2:19 says this. They went out from us, but they were not really of us for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us, but they went out so that it would be shown that they are not of us. It's sobering when we think about all the people that grow up in the church that have had every opportunity to Christ, and we say things like this, "Oh, they went off to college and they lost their faith." Here's what I would say. They never had it to begin with.

Amen.

They never had it to begin with. They're living what they're living in total rebellion of God, because they always did even when they sat here, they just couldn't act out on the full measure and they need Jesus. I mean, this is a troubling passage for those of us to come to church every week that don't have Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and savior. Isn't it?

Yes.

Because I believe just because we open our doors doesn't mean that everybody who walks in here is a Christian. I don't believe that everybody tells stories. Well, I did this and then I did this and then I did this and now I think I'm a Christian. Have you repented and trusted Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of your sins? Are you comfortable with letting Jesus Christ be the Lord of your life in every area? That's what he's pointing at here. And here's what he says say. He says, "Well, how do I know this is the good news?" That spiritual lethargy becomes obvious over time.

You can see it in your own life and you can see it in the lives of others. Notice the story that he tells at the end. In verse seven and 80 says, for ground that drinks the rain, which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled receives a blessing from God. But if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed and it ends up being burned. He says that when the same gospel goes out over the same group of people and falls just like rain falls on the ground, to some who have trusted Christ as lord, it begins to bear fruit, but those

who don't have Christ as Lord, it still produces thorns and thistles. Why? Because there's nothing wrong with the word of God. When the word of God gets into good soil, it always produces a harvest.

The parable of the sowers talks about hard soil and weedy soil and rocky soil that chokes out that seed making it unfruitful because people like that don't have a heart for God. Some are hardened towards it, some appear that they have joy, but it burns out and some are choked by the world. And none of them fruit because none of them in their life, Jesus Christ is Lord. But when the word of God gets planted in a heart that says, I want you to be the Lord of my life. It always produces 30, 60, or even 100 fold. John 15 says, this to my father's glory that you bear much fruit and prove to be my disciples. It is normal for the Christian to bear fruit. If you've been a Christian for a period of time, you will begin to notice changes in your life that more reflect the life of Christ. You'll have a greater love for God. You'll have a greater love for other people. You'll have a greater hunger for his word. You'll have a greater hunger for prayer.

You'll find yourself stewarding your resources different. You'll find yourself handling your relationships different. Things will begin to change. What it doesn't mean is that you'll be perfect from the a time you trust Christ. We're not talking about somebody that's imperfect here. We're talking about somebody who's rejecting the gospel, but here's what I want to talk about. We use the word backslide in church all the time. I don't really find that word in the Bible too much. Now, the Bible does say that at times we slide back for a little period of time, perhaps, but not 25 years. Maybe

for a little bit. That's why in Galatians 5:1, he tells us, brethren even if anyone is caught in a trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, each one looking to yourself so that you two won't be tempted. There are times in our life we need Christian community around us to say, "Hey bro, are you doing the right thing?"

I became a Christian right before I went to college. I had all sorts of behaviors of mine that followed me into my Christian life. That weren't good. And I remember my junior year, one of the guys I was in a Bible study with, I had the utmost respect for, and he walked his talk. We were in the locker room before practice. One day, he said, "Hey, how is it you call yourself a Christian and talk like that?" I had a filthy mouth. But when he said it to me, I wasn't mad at him. I wasn't like, "Who are you to talk to me?" It kind of hurt my heart. Like, "Hey, he doesn't think I'm doing this thing." And I went home and began to pray to the Lord. I'm like, "Lord, how do I change my mouth?" And God walked me through the scriptures and said, "It's not your mouth I need to change, it's your heart. And if I change your heart, then your mouth will change." And God began to change my heart and my mouth began to change.

And God did a work in me, not because I tried to fix my language, but because I repented of my sin and asked Jesus to cleanse me and change me. Right? We go through seasons like that. But what I'm not talking about is when we talk about backslid, when we talk about somebody when they're in the casket and we're officiating their funeral and they died at 84 and they went through a myriad of marriages and they were horrible to people and they spent all their money on

themselves and they were wicked and they were ugly and they foul mouth and they were abusive and they got into fights all the time. And they did all these things. And then the funeral we say something like this. Yeah, I think they're in Heaven because when they were eight, they went to Brave Church. They were at high five and they prayed to receive Christ. That's not backsliding, that's not trusting Jesus.

You see the difference? I mean, all of us have moments in our life that we a about since becoming a Christian, but it should be like the stock market that we keep moving up. And all of us as Christians can sin all the same sins non-Christians can sin and there shouldn't be shame for that, there should be the blood of Jesus that washes those things clean and we move on. That's true. These three girls in our church that gave me a t-shirt recently that said, "Live your life so that your pastor doesn't have to lie at your funeral." I like that shirt. And that's what he's talking about here. He's talking about here, not are you perfect. Because none of us are on this side of Heaven. He's saying, are you growing? Are you moving up? Because perhaps there's some of you here today and some of you are listening to my voice today and you're not growing. You've been spiritually stunted for so long and the way that you grow is by watching others grow.

Maybe you like the way your pastor's growing, maybe you like the way your small group leader is growing. Maybe you like the way your spouse is growing. Maybe you like the way your mom and dad are growing and you're around it, so you feel like you're grown, but if we were to really examine your heart, you'd say, "I'm not growing

at all. I haven't grown at all." Maybe, just maybe, this is the warning passage you needed to hear that God has brought you so close and you're to the point of repentance, but you've never crossed the line and said, "Jesus, I need you to be my Lord." Why not make today the day? And for others of you where Jesus Christ is the Lord of your life, perhaps you've been playing games like I was when I was in college, not even being aware of some of the sin the Lord was trying to point out to me, where you're trying to fix it on yourself.

You're trying to make commitments to God and you come to church like, "Hey, this week I'm going to stop this. And this week I'm going to start this. And this week I commit. I'll never do that again." But what you've never done is say, "Jesus, I'm done with that. You be the Lord of my life. Lord, you forgive me. I'm going to receive all your forgiveness today. I confess my sin before you. I want to turn from that change who I am." Do you know Jesus has a perfect track record of changing people's lives? You know the beauty of this passage? No matter how severe and dark and disgusting your sin is, the blood of Jesus Christ is greater than that and he will wash it all clean. Isn't that good news. That's what he's talking about here. And he tells us, he goes, "Hey..." It's going to become obvious. I mean, Matthew seven, Jesus says you can know people by their fruits.

Well, I can't look into everybody's heart and I can't discern oh, Christian, non-Christian, Christian, non-Christian although we can sometimes. Here's what Jesus says in Matthew chapter seven starting in verse 16. He says, "You will know them by the fruits." Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles. Are they? So

a good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit nor a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire. So then you will know them by their fruits. We're scared to say that to people sometimes. Who are you to tell me? Because I'm a discerner in the word of righteousness and I know that you don't have a heart for God. And if you do, you would repent.

Good trees produce good fruit, bad trees produce bad fruit. Look at your land. Look at the soil of your heart. Is God producing fruit in you or is it barren and about to get burned? The tragedy in this life is not dying, the tragedy of this life is dying apart from Christ. The bigger tragedy would be dying apart from Christ when you've been hearing from God's word clearly that Jesus Christ is willing to save your soul and save you to the full right at this moment. And that no one could ever take that away from you. And he's offering you a gift that you don't take. That would be even more tragic. So the way I want to end our services today is by giving you the opportunity to respond to the gospel. I've had you stand to your feet with everybody looking and we clap and that's great. But today I want to do something different. In a minute on both campuses, some of our elders, some of our pastors come forward.

And for some of you today, if the Lord's been prompting your heart, why don't you give your life to Jesus Christ? Why don't you quit playing games and let him be the Lord of your life. And for others of you that have been wrestling with sin, and you've tried to get over it, and you've worked really hard at it and you promised God it's not going to... But it's not changed, why don't you come to the altar this morning? Because

God's arms are open wide for you. And here's the great news about God. When you come walk into him, he goes running after you. And there're some of you today that God wants to cleanse, forgive, heal, make whole and sends you on your way in a way you never have been sent. He loves you, loves you, loves you. In case you're sitting here and you're hearing the lie of the enemy, "I think I'm that one that's impossible." You wouldn't be here if it was still impossible. With God, all things are possible. He's calling you forward today to give your life to him. Amen.

Amen.

So I'm just going to have you stand. I'm going to pray for you as our elders and pastors come forward. I want to sing this song, but the altar is open on both of our campuses. Lord Jesus, we just give you praise, glory and honor for who you are. And Lord, in this moment right now, for those who have been diagnosed with a spiritual appetite that's suppressed and can't discern good from evil and have really no desire to walk with you because they prefer their religion to a relationship, and recognize that you're truly not their Lord, Father do a work in this service that can only be attributed to you. Let them come to your alter and experience your grace.

Lord for those who are here, who you are the Lord of their life, but they're wrestling with the same sin over and over, set them free today and Lord for all you're going to do and all you're doing right now, we give you praise. Don't let one person who you're talking to leave this building without being set free by the blood of Jesus. Lord, do your work in our midst. We give you all the praise in Jesus name. Amen.