

A Faith That Will Not Grow — Delivery Transcript

Hebrews 5:11–6:3 (CSB) • Wes Terry • Sunday, March 23, 2025 • Neglecting Salvation

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If you have your Bible, we're going to be in the book of Hebrews. We're going to be in Hebrews chapter 5 this morning. And as you're turning there, if you're new to Broadview, we typically preach through books of the Bible and we usually go line by line, chapter by chapter, verse by verse. But this series is a little different in that we're just hitting the warning passages because the book of Hebrews is essentially a written sermon and as a sermon it has teaching sections followed by exhortation sections. And the teaching sections are really, really great.

But I wanted us to look at the warnings as we make our way towards Easter because I think they're particularly relevant. For the life of our church in this season. And hope you've benefited from these passages as I have. As you're making your way to the book of Hebrews, if you're in a pew Bible, by the way, if you don't have a Bible, there should be one on the chair in the seat in front of you. We're going to be on page 1063. And I'm going to be preaching from the pew Bible this morning.

The other day I was in Roby. I talk about Roby a lot. Probably talk about Roby too much, but we were in Roby the other day and my wife and my mom were looking at a series of pictures from a photo album. They were giggling and laughing and I asked what are you guys laughing about? And then I looked and saw pictures of myself that I thought had been burned or lost or had since been done away with. But there they were in all of their glory in my mom's little photo album.

And they just thought it was so funny and so cute. And I thought to myself, things have changed. You know, I don't look like that anymore. It's not fair to laugh at me. And also wondering as I was making my way through Hebrews that I wonder if God had a spiritual photo album, how many of us would look any different from the day that we became a Christian to the day that is today from what we are now as a believer. And theoretically, as you grow older as a human being, certain things begin to change.

For example, if you take physical transformation as you age. I'll show you a couple of pictures from my growing up years. I started out with the whole sailor baby costume. You guys remember the sailor baby costume? Any of you else have had a picture like that as a sailor? I think these were pretty popular back in the day. Look at those beautiful blue eyes. I don't know where those went, but they're gone now. Now they're green. Then I turned into, you know, these Joe Biden-looking sunglasses, aviator shades. I don't know what that was about.

And then I became like this too cool for school. I was into dog tags. That's back when DC Talk was a thing. You guys remember DC Talk? Down with the DC Talk. I was all down with the DC Talk. I had this little dog tag that was like Jesus loves me or some kind of Jesus juke like that. And then I became too cool for school and I was like, I'm going to wear a leather jacket and I thought I was top stuff and bleached my hair and that didn't work out too long.

So I got into high school. This is I think I was a sophomore or a freshman. I thought I was hot stuff because I was varsity, playing both sides, offense and defense. I was strong like I got into lifting weights and I was actually pretty good at it and then after that year my parents took me out of school. I became homeschooled for a year or two and hated that season of my life, not so much because my parents weren't loving and doing what they thought were right.

I just the enemy used that season of my life to do some things in my spirit that even till today, I'm very sad and tragic that they happened. But I came out of that season. I went into my senior year of high school thinking I'm finally going to play ball again, I'm going to get my life back. And I ended up having to have two major reconstructive foot surgeries. And that's me in the hospital looking like the Real Slim Shady for those of you who know what that's talking about.

And I thought I was an OG. There's still some mixtapes out there in Fisher County and Taylor County, hope none of you ever get your hands on, but by God's grace, I graduated, got into college, came to Broadview, met Audra. This is the dog I bought Audra on like three or four weeks in. I'm just joking. We weren't three or four weeks in, but I don't know how long we've been dating. I bought her this dog, Kodo, great, wonderful dog, recently died. And then there's something more recent but as you can see things have changed, right?

I don't look the way that I did when I started out and that's what's supposed to happen as a human being physical growth is automatic. It happens whether you like it or not. And for those of you who are in your forties and fifties, it's going to keep happening whether you like it or not and you're just going to change. The thing is about spiritual growth, it is not automatic. Spiritual growth is a choice. Physical growth is automatic. Spiritual growth is not. And when it comes to your spiritual growth, there is a way in which you can stagnate spiritually so that not only do you continue to look the same as you did say ten years ago, 20 years ago, but that actually if you stagnate in your spiritual growth, you begin to regress

spiritually and you actually become younger and younger in the faith or less and less mature than you had originally been.

And that is what was happening in the lives of those that the author of Hebrews is writing to. They were second generation Christians. They had converted from Old Testament Judaism or first century Judaism. And so they had assumptions about how to be made right with God, about salvation, that were steeped in that Old Testament religion. And the author of Hebrews is saying, you guys have come to understand the gospel. You should be growing in your understanding of who Jesus is and what he's about. But instead, you're slipping back into that old way of thinking and you were becoming immature in your faith and as a result you're inviting God's judgment onto your life.

And he's not doing that, I don't think, to make them feel bad. It's not a guilt trip. I don't think he's trying to cause them to doubt their salvation unnecessarily, although these warning passages do have that effect. Rather, I think he is trying to plead with these Christians that your Heavenly Father desperately desires for you to experience the abundant life that is in Jesus. That when you put your faith in Jesus, there is joy and contentment and peace and all of these great gifts from your Heavenly Father, but the only way for that abundant life to fill your heart is for you to mature in your faith.

And so he challenges them for their immaturity and encourages them to press on. To actual maturity. Now, we again are not formerly Jewish converts, and so a lot of the things that he says may not resonate immediately with you, but we all share in common their tendency to drift in the faith. And if we're not careful, if we find ourselves stagnating spiritually, we can end up succumbing to the same kinds of problems that they did. So with that said, let's pick up our text. Hebrews chapter 5. And again, everything that the book of Hebrews says is to develop the thesis that Jesus is better.

He's better than those old covenant Ten Commandments. He's better than that old covenant Exodus from slavery. He's set us free from sin. He's giving us the word of God's gospel in Jesus. And then in chapter 5 he transitions to this comparison of the priesthood in the Old Testament. And again, we're not Jewish, so the priesthood thing will go over a lot of our heads. But he's essentially arguing in the Old Testament God gave you a priest to mediate between you and God. He gave you a priest that was human, that understood what it's like to struggle with sin, and he gave you someone who could pray for you and ask God's forgiveness for you.

And those things were given not as an end unto themselves, but as a means that would point to Jesus, because he is an even greater priest. Okay, that's what chapter five is all about. And the one priest he lifts up as a comparison tool is this guy by the name of Melchizedek. Has anybody ever heard of Melchizedek? His name literally means my God is king. Melchizedek. No, no, king of righteousness. There it is. King of righteousness. He's in the book of Genesis,

chapter 14. Very interesting figure, very interesting argument that he develops in chapters 7 and 8 and 9 after he rebukes them for their immaturity.

But he begins to recognize as I am developing how Jesus is better than Melchizedek that you guys have no idea what I'm talking about. It'd be like you if you're a dad talking to your son or daughter. About something really important but a little bit over their head and as you're explaining it you recognize okay I'm not connecting they're not tracking with me and that's what this author is feeling as he's writing this letter in this section in chapter five. And so he says in chapter five, verse eleven, I've got a lot more to explain.

I've got a great deal more to say about this, but it's too difficult to explain why. Because you have become too lazy. You've become too lazy. The concept is difficult. It is profound. I'll grant him that. But the problem wasn't the complication of the theology. It was they had become dull in their hearing. And not only were they dull in their hearing, by this time they ought to have been teachers. But not only are you not teaching, you need someone to teach you. The ABCs is the Greek word, the elementary letters of God's revelation again.

You need milk, not solid food. Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness because he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil. Notice all of the sensory language. I hope you're underlining that. Therefore, let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance. From dead works, faith in God, teaching about ritual washings, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. Let's leave all of that and go on to maturity and we will do this if God permits.

Now if we were in the gathering place after the service. And we were engaged in a pretty sophisticated conversation and out of nowhere I pulled this like baby bottle out of my pocket and I said, mm-hmm, and I just started sipping on it and there was actually like milk looking stuff in here. It would probably be one of the most awkward conversations you and I have ever had, would it not? It would be weird. And if I said, no, it's not my mother's milk, it's formula, you would still be like, well, why?

And if you knew me well and if you loved me, you would probably say to me, Wes, I don't know if you're trying to make a joke or if you're trying to be funny, but it's not funny, bro. That's kind of weird. And you need to stop. You need to grow up. Just like when my kids, they're like 10 and 7, I don't remember how old they are. But sometimes my kids will go into baby mode. It's out of nowhere. And they'll be like, oh, I got my little blanket.

And they'll wrap themselves up in their blanket and they'll pull out the pacifier and try to like start sucking on that pacifier. Sinful anger fills my heart. I say, give me that pacifier. You are not a baby. No. It drives me nuts because they are not a baby and it is not funny. You need to

act your age. And that's what the author of Hebrews is saying here. But notice how he says it. He says, you're too lazy to understand. And if you have a CSB, I'm sorry, an ESV, NASB, KJV, any of those word-to-word translations, it actually translates it better in my opinion.

And it says you've become dull of hearing. That's what the Greek literally says. And I love that sensory language because the Bible is full of sensory language. The Psalms talk about taste and see that the Lord is good. Say God open the eyes of my heart. The reason I like that language is it's so insightful as to how God has designed us in his image, not just to taste and smell and touch and see, but that he's also given us spiritual faculties with which we can engage spiritual realities in the world.

So that we can see with the eyes of our heart, we can touch people spiritually, we can sense the manifest presence of God in tangible but spiritual ways. And just like your physical faculties can become impaired. or desensitized and become dull, you can lose your smell, you can lose your taste. COVID was a great example of that. Just like that's true in the physical sense, so also can that become true in the spiritual sense, where you no longer sense God's presence, you no longer really taste that God is good, he's just kind of bland.

You're not hungering for God's word. Your appetite has kind of just grown dull. You hear the Bible like you hear sermons and it just don't connect with you anymore. If anything, you become a little more critical. What's happening is that your spiritual faculties are becoming dull. And that's exactly what he's saying is the cause of their immaturity. They have become immature because their spiritual faculties have grown dull. And it's really a summary of the two warnings we've looked at thus far. In the first warning he said you've gotten lazy ears.

You need to pay attention. The second warning he said you've gotten a hard heart and your heart is grown numb. And this warning, number three, he's just putting those two together, in my opinion. And he's saying, your unhearing ears and your unfeeling heart have resulted in you having a baby faith. And God is not okay with you having a baby faith. In fact, God is grieved by your baby faith because it is keeping you from hearing Him and experiencing the fullness of the abundant life he desperately desires you to have.

And so it's not okay to have baby faith. Now the question is, how did that happen? How did they get baby faith? There's a lot of things I can point to in my life that have caused me to drift or regress spiritually. But the thing that he mentions and the thing that without fail will cause baby faith in your life is a neglect of the Word of God. And he describes that neglect in chapter 5, verse 12. As although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the ABCs, the elementary letters of God's revelation again, you need milk, not solid food.

I know that's just one verse, but it's so packed full of what was wrong in their faith. I'm going to put it under three headings if you're taking notes. The first thing that was wrong is that

they were not sharing what they had learnt. And you notice the phrase, by this time you ought to be teachers. He's not saying you should be teachers like I'm a teacher, like a preacher teacher. He's not saying, you know, you've been a Christian for three weeks now, you ought to be able to preach the Sunday morning sermon.

You know, no pressure, right? But he is saying you need to be able to pour out into others what God has been pouring into you. The New Testament is full of that kind of language that you teach and admonish one another. It's not just my job as a preacher to teach and preach the word of God. It's your job as a hearer to hear God's word taught and to pour that out into other people, whether that's at the level of your family, friends, small group participants. Random guy at work or in the convenience store.

I mean there's a thousand different applications. But the point is as a Christian you were never designed to just sit and soak and consume and consume and consume. You were always designed to hear and then bear fruit. To receive in and then to pour out. And when you stop pouring out, you begin to stagnate in your faith. The only real way to learn something is to be able to teach it, to know it well enough, to share it with other people. And that's what he's saying. You've stopped doing that. And that's why you have baby faith.

And again, it says by this time, and then that phrase translated, you've become too lazy to understand. That's what's called a perfect tense verb in the original Greek, which means it was a past action that had continuing abiding effects. So it's not like they were always like this. They used to be quick to hear and teach. They used to be people who would hear a sermon and then pour it out into the lives of the people that they loved, but somewhere along the line that stopped. And not only is it that they should be teachers and no longer are, it's the phrase by this time, which means they're mature enough or they're old enough in the faith that it shouldn't have to be that way.

It'd be one thing if you were a baby Christian, like you got saved three weeks ago. We wouldn't expect you to like go home and lead the family devotionals on Wayne Grudem's systematic theology. That would be crazy. We wouldn't be wanting or asking you to do that. That would be crushing. You would be crushed under the weight of that responsibility. He's not saying that. He's saying you guys have been Christians for, I don't know, 10 years, 15 years? Probably not 15 years, because it's 60 A.D.

So maybe five years, seven years, but by this time it should be taking place. And you're not sharing. And not only were they not sharing, he goes up one more than that. He says, you're not showing what you have learned. You're not sharing what you've learned, and you're not showing that you've learned. In fact their inability to share is probably what exposed their inability to show. It'd be like you as a ninth grader. Trying to help your sister or brother with their first grade homework and you're sitting there trying to do first grade homework and you can't even help her.

So how are you going to do ninth grade algebra if you can't even do first grade math? You got to go back and do it again. It's like spiritual Billy Madison. You guys ever watch Billy Madison? It's been a long time since I've watched it, so I'm not sure that I can recommend it, but basically the idea is that this guy was a trust fund baby. Everything he'd ever had had been given to him. He was lazy. He was worthless. And he was about to inherit his dad's business.

And so they had to send him back to school to learn all the things that he didn't pay attention to and he goes first grade, second grade, third grade. My favorite clip in the movie is, I think it's like eighth grade science and they're talking about the medulla oblongata. Oh man, it's so good. And he's like, oh, the medulla oblongata, it's so awesome. And he's having to go back and learn it all again, and that's what's happening to these Christians spiritually. I have to go back and lay the foundation.

We've got to do the basics all over again because you're not living them out. It's not that they didn't have them up here, it's that they weren't revealing it in their daily life. How were they not revealing it? They were slipping back into Judaism. They were slipping back into works-based righteousness, temple worships, ritual washings. They were slipping and evidencing their lack of faith through the way they live their lives. And again, we don't necessarily feel tempted to slip back into Judaism, but we often do slip back into the former ways of thinking and living that we had prior to becoming a believer.

And that's not okay. That's how you become a baby. So he's not sharing, they're not showing, and then the last thing, and maybe the most severe thing, is they weren't seeking after more. He says by this time you should be on solid food, but you're stuck on milk. Again, that'd be like if we were at Cotton Patch. Which is my favorite place to go for meetings, by the way. You say, Wes, can we meet this week? I say, absolutely. Where do you want to eat? I'll say Cotton Patch.

I love Cotton Patch. The thing I love at Cotton Patch, I can't remember if it's Thursdays or Fridays, but they have this hamburger steak with brown gravy on it. Mmm, so good. And I get a little fried okra. Maybe green beans, maybe rice, just depends on the mood I'm in. But let's say we go at the Cotton Patch and you know that I trend towards those kind of steak and potatoes type things, but when we sit down I pull out my little bottle here and I go to sucking on it.

And you go, well, do you want some of the bread? No, got my bottle. Got my bottle. You would say, that's weird. You know, that's weird you've got solid food here and it's good food. It's like the thing about solid food that's different from baby food, especially if you've gotten off the milk of the baby food, it's like the baby food that's not milk, but it's not food. It's like all blended together and mushed up. It's at the very elementary level. It's not even that.

You are still on the super, super baby stuff. And you shouldn't be content with that. That's what he's saying. You should be hungry for deep, good, rich theology. And I don't think he's talking about like go figure out how the end times work and when Jesus is coming back and why everybody's charts are wrong. I don't necessarily think he means that, although he could mean that. I think he means take the foundational layer of the gospel. And go deeper and deeper and deeper so that you see the ways in which that gospel applies to these very nuanced, difficult arenas.

Show yourself to have wisdom in the messiness of life because you've taken the elementary truths and dove deep into those truths so that you see how they come to materialize in very complicated situations in your life, and you don't have any desire for that whatsoever, that is not okay. The angels, the Bible says the angels long to look into the gospel. They are so envious of us created in God's image who have this gospel revealed to us and get to display it with our lives. And many of us, as C. S. Lewis said, are like little kids at the ocean and we're playing with mud pies when the ocean of God's glory and grace and the beauty of his gospel is beckoning us to come and to enjoy and to be consumed and we're just playing with the mud. And he's saying that is weird. That is not okay. You are immature. And you shouldn't be this immature at this point in your life. So stop neglecting the word of God. Stop neglecting these elementary principles. Now the question you might raise after that is what are these elementary principles?

He explains them in chapter six. And we are going to get to the warning, verses four to six. It's extremely difficult. We'll do it next week. But I wanted to spend time on the foundation of why this warning was so severe because of what they were doing. He's saying, let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to maturity. This is what's called a divine passive. He's saying you need to be carried on by God unto the genuine spiritual maturity. So leave the elementary, leave the ABCs of the Christian faith.

And go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance. Now I think it's important to not misread this. Some translations lose the again. And the idea I think is that we're not leaving behind the foundation. The foundation is great, right? We don't want to lose these things. Repentance, faith. Baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection, eternal judgment, those are the core. He's not saying leave them behind, like don't think about them. He's saying leave them where they are in place, but let's go on and build on top of them.

Let's go deeper into what it means to be justified by grace through faith. Let's go deeper into how to ready yourselves for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's go deeper into how we don't need ritual washings under the old covenant every time you touch a dead person or your spouse is on a cycle. You don't have to wash and wash and wash. Jesus washed us once and for all through his atoning death on the cross. Let's leave the foundation

in place, but let's build upon it. Because if you lose the foundation, and again this phrase, foundation of repentance, some people read repentance and immediately they think, tell God you're sorry for your bad stuff you do.

And it's at least that. Repentance is agreeing with God that your sinful acts are sinful, but at a foundational level, repentance is just changing your mind. So what he's saying is, I think this author had done deep work in discipleship with these Jewish converts. He's saying we have already done the hard work of changing your thinking. About how to be right with God, about how to be clean before the Lord, about how to experience forgiveness and what Jesus is about in the resurrection and how do we get right with God at the end of days.

We've already done the important mental work of shifting your assumptions at those foundational levels. And if you lose that foundation, everything else that you do on top of a loose foundation is worthless. If you get it wrong here you're going to get it wrong everywhere else. So we got to leave this in place and we need to build upon it. And the same would be true for us. Now these six things, the dead works, a lot of people say that's basic Christian doctrine, and it is. You're not saved by works, you're saved by grace.

But why dead works? To me, that's a very Jewish thing to say. Because these are very Jewish people. Under the Jewish system in the old covenant, especially in the first century, the way that you could be really right with God is to be like one of those Pharisees. You didn't just obey the 613 commandments in the Old Testament. You created commandments on top of the commandments to be even extra good before God. And you actually kind of felt a sense of superiority over the irreligious people who didn't obey the commands because you obeyed all the commands plus some.

And what Paul says in Galatians and Romans chapter 2 is, you self-righteous dummy, you just break the law, but you do it in a different way. You think your works justify you before God? Isaiah says, even our righteousness is like a filthy rag before the Lord. You are dead in your spiritual trespasses and sins. And you can be a religious dead person or you can be an irreligious dead person, but we're all spiritually dead. You're dead and you're saved by grace. Not works. It's by God's grace. Well how do you have that grace come into your life?

That's where he goes next. You've got to have faith in God. Specifically faith in God through trusting that He has made provision for your sin in the person of Jesus Christ. That on the cross, Jesus, this great exchange took place on the cross where Jesus received your sin and he clothed you with his righteousness. That Jesus did what you could not do and that he perfectly obeyed the law. He fulfilled the demands of God's law in the old covenant. And not only did he fulfill them, he kind of fully explained them.

He said it's not about adultery, it's about lust. It's not about murder, it's about hate in your heart. And so he takes the demands of God's law and he elevates them, and then he even in

the elevated standard perfectly fulfills them so that when he dies on the cross, he is giving his life as a gift of grace. To us so that we can be clothed with his righteousness and he can be clothed with our sin and depravity. As the Bible says, he who knew no sin became sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

That's what he's saying. That's foundational. Do not lose that. Do not go back to ceremonial washings. Where you think it's what you do that makes you clean before God. Don't go back into that every time you do even the slightest thing wrong, you feel like it's up to you to make atonement. Don't slip back into that. That is a dead end. That system is going away. Jesus has spoken a better word. He has brought in a new covenant and the temple is about to be destroyed in 70 A.D. It is a fool's errand.

It is through faith in Jesus that you are washed. It is through faith in Jesus that you are forgiven. It is through faith in Jesus that you are saved by God's grace and not your works. And it is through faith in Jesus that you can stand secure and safe. In the arms of God, who in any other day has every right to destroy you for your sin, but spares you not for your sake, but because he sees in you the Son that he loves. Because of his great love for you and sending his son to do for you what you couldn't do for yourself.

And he's about to say, if you leave that, if you drift back away, if you leave that gospel, if you apostatize and fall away from that truth. Then what hope do you have? In what other universe can you be made right with God if that is what God demands and that is the means with which He has made provision to meet it? And so you've got to leave these things behind and you've got to grow up. You've got to build on the foundation instead of losing the foundation. And that's where he goes next.

Very quickly, we got to hurry up. Verse 13. Now everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced with the message about righteousness because he's an infant. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have, notice this phrase, whose senses, there's that word again, have been trained. That's where we get our English word gymnastics. In other words, he doesn't just hear it, he practices it. He puts it into practice. And that's what enables him to distinguish between good and evil. Again, I don't think this is like moral and immoral. When you're really mature as a Christian and you take the truth of God's design and it is so deeply embedded.

And you have so deeply thought about it when life gets really, really messy, because sinful people do sinful things, and the more the sin abounds, the messier the situation becomes. When you're in that kind of situation, the wisdom to distinguish right from wrong is really hard. But that's what mature people do. Mature people have the wisdom necessary to distinguish between right and wrong. So he's saying leave all that infant baby faith stuff to the side. Grow in your hunger for solid food. Practice what it is that you learn from the Lord.

And do it in such a way that when the rubber meets the road and no one else has any idea, you can come along and say this is the way we should go, because you can distinguish good from evil. Therefore, let us leave the elementary teaching and go on to maturity. There are things in your life that I just don't have any ability to speak into. And you could come to my office and you could explain what's going on and it could be a legit question. Should I do this or should I do that?

And there's going to be an inability on my account to say this is what God requires. Because sometimes it's not that easy. I don't know if you should marry him or her or go to this school or that school or should you buy or should you sell? I don't know. I can give you my best guess. I can give you what I might do in the same situation, but I can't know. There's just so much about your life I can't know. But there's one thing about your life I do know.

And I can have absolute confidence and say without apology that if you are not doing this one thing, then you are not walking in the will of God for your life. And the one thing I absolutely know God wants for you is for you to grow up spiritually. He wants you to be spiritually mature. He even put a Bible verse on it in 1 Thessalonians 4. This is God's will, your sanctification. It's short enough everyone can memorize it. This is God's will, your sanctification. And then right after that he goes on to all of these things you know you ought to be doing, so do them.

And my fear is that our church, just like most churches in the West, in America, in a very godless culture, we have grown way too comfortable with baby faith. And it gets justified for all kinds of reasons. You might point to all the good things you do. And they did good things. He's about to commend them. You show hospitality. You do it in the name of Jesus. God is not going to forget that, but it doesn't make up for the baby faith. It doesn't make up for your neglect of God's word and you've gotten comfortable neglecting God's word and think that God doesn't care and he does care.

Just like you would care if we were in the gathering place and I was sucking on a baby bottle, you would say, that's not funny. That's weird. It's not okay. And I wonder if, and I please don't misunderstand me, I'm not trying to say this in a judgmental way at all, because I'm preaching to the mirror, trust me. I wonder if there are things in our lives that we have just gotten really comfortable with because we no longer feel conviction about those things in our life. And the reason we don't feel conviction isn't because God isn't grieved.

The reason we don't feel conviction is because our senses have gotten dull. Because we are not practicing what God tells us to do. And because we're not hungry for what God wants to say. And because we're not wise in what godliness should look like in our very complicated, nuanced lives. And I wonder if you were really honest with the Lord and asked the question: is there anything in my life that I have been tolerating as okay that is not okay with you?

What the Lord would say. He may not be okay with your reasons for skipping so much church, in other words.

Or he may not be okay with your justifications for what you're doing sexually. So, well, we haven't crossed the line. You've crossed God's line, but not mom's line, or not dad's line. You know what it was for me, just so you know I'm not picking on you. I believe in tithing 100%. I believe God blesses you when you honor Him with your finances. In our family, we tithe, we try to go above and beyond the tithe. Every year we try to grow in our generosity. And I got a raise last year and I didn't change it.

I didn't log into our online giving account to up the amount that I was giving. Because I was like, well it's already above what probably is reasonable and you know I knew it was wrong. I knew I should have changed it, but I didn't. And then every time I felt convicted about changing it, I didn't because it was inconvenient and I was busy. I am writing sermons after all. And slowly I just stopped feeling bad about it. And as I was preparing this text, asking the Holy Spirit, is there anything I'm tolerating in my life that is not okay with you?

And he said, yeah, you owe me money. You owe me money. It's not a lot of money. It's not a ton of money, but it's as if the Lord said, that is not okay. And you think it's okay, and it's not okay. It's not cute. It's not funny. It's not, God knows my heart. Well he does know your heart. That's your problem. He knows your heart. And you can have all the heart motivations in the world and they be ridiculous, crazy, not convincing to God whatsoever any more than me sucking a baby bottle would be convincing to you that I am something that I'm not.

You're not what you think you are, and you may not know that you're not what you think you are because you no longer have the spiritual faculties to discern it. Because you've been living in unbelief. You've been living in unrepentant sin. And it's hard a lot of times because it's not the big bad sins. It's not the cheating on your spouse or stealing from the government. But it's not okay with the Lord. And we could go line by line. I mean I could sit here all day and meddle in your mail.

Of the things that you have tolerated for an extended period of time and you think it's no big deal, and here's what's happening to your spiritual life, you are regressing. And you don't know it because you can't feel it. Because that's how hardening works. It's gradual, it's subtle, it's over time, and then one day you wake up and you can't hear God anymore. And you don't sense God in worship anymore. And you go home criticizing the sermon instead of applying it. And you find all the reasons in the world to disconnect from your small group because they're a bunch of hypocrites anyway.

And you think you're right and they're wrong and God's on your side and he's not. And you don't know it. Because you are regressing spiritually. And I don't say that again to judge you because I'm right there with you. Number two, I don't say that to make you feel bad or to

make you doubt your salvation. I say that because your Heavenly Father loves you so much. And he desperately desires for you to have the abundant life that is in Jesus. A life of contentment and joy and peace and the fullness of the life of God.

But if you are going to experience that life, it has to come on his terms, not yours. And his terms are you can't be a baby Christian. You need to pursue spiritual maturity. Now, what does that look like? He actually gives a pretty good outline. Let's read it again, verses 13 to 14. Everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced. In other words, they don't practice what they preach. They are content on baby ABC faith. They're inexperienced with a message about righteousness because he is an infant. Solid food is for the mature.

In other words, graduate from ABC Christianity to Cotton Patch special, wonderful food. Those whose senses have been trained. Notice that phrase. Again, where we get the word gymnastics. It's not just they practice what they preach, they practice it in a way as though God is using this test in my life to prepare me for greater things. The reason I want to be obedient to the Lord is not to make God happy, but because God has given me an opportunity to get strong. And so I want to work out. I want to train.

I want to do what God says because He's making me into a better man or woman. And then finally they distinguish between good and evil. Our church, let me just be honest, our church needs men and women who are mature enough in the faith, they don't just know the difference between right and wrong. They know how to take a very messy, messy problem and say, here's where I think God is leading us to go. Because they can prove it when it matters. So what do you need to do? You need to progress in what you're putting in.

You need to grow in the word. Some of you, if you don't even have a quiet time, just start right there. Every day, open up God's word and say, Lord, I want to learn. I don't just want to read for the facts. I want to experience you in the Word. For others of you, it might be you are living in unrepentant sin, and maybe like me, you didn't even know it until you asked the question. And today you need to say, Holy Spirit, is there anything I've gotten okay with that you're not?

Is there anything that's normal for me that is not normal for a maturing Christian? And to just let the Holy Spirit bring to your mind anything in your life that you have been tolerating that he is finding intolerable, and then just change it. Just stop. Just go log in to your giving account and raise it up. That's mine. I don't know what yours is. I'm not saying you need to give more money, although if you want to, that's fine. But I'm saying there's probably something. I am a preacher and I was living in unrepentant sin and I didn't know it.

It wasn't bothering me. And what might be bothering the Lord that's not bothering you because you haven't stopped to ask. And then finally, would you pray that you would become a man or a woman of wisdom? Some of you are dads. You're moms. And you don't want your

child to be in a situation where it is not easy to know what's right and wrong. And they need a man or a woman who says, you know what, I've been working out for years. I've been going to the God gym for so many years.

I think, even though it's really complicated, I think I can help here. Or maybe a counselor in the life of our church, or just a really solid church member in a small group, when someone's life falls upside down, you're able to come alongside of them and say, here's where we need to go. Our church desperately needs people of wisdom. And it all begins with you committing to growing up in the faith. So lovingly, gently as I know how. We need to grow up. Every one of us need to grow up in the faith.

And if we'll commit to that, we can escape the greater judgment that visits those who hear and refuse. And so let's not be guilty of that. The band's going to lead us in a time of response. I asked them to play a full song so we'd have time to really respond to the Lord. The altar is open if you want to pray. I'm just going to sit here on the front row. If you want me to pray with you or for you, I'd be happy to do that. There's other people who would be more than willing to help you take the next step or to give you some accountability to help you grow.

Because it's one thing to hear a sermon and feel guilty, it's another thing to actually put it into practice. And so if you want some accountability, some help, fill out that connect card. On the chair in the seat in front of you or come see me during the invitation. And then finally if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, and as I was going over those ABCs of the faith, you recognized, oh man, I'm not a Christian. I thought it was about what I do. I thought it was about going to church and trying hard.

No, it's not. It's about what Jesus Christ has done for you. And his grace is available to you today if you would just repent and believe. Admit your sins have separated you from God, that God loved you so much he sent his son to pay the price for your sins. And three days later, God raised him from the dead so he could say to your brokenness. It's paid in full, and I can give you life, abundant life, if you'll just repent and believe on me. And if he's calling you to make that decision today, then let this be a time where you publicly profess.

Your faith in Jesus. But you do as the Lord leads. Father in heaven, we thank you for this text. We thank you for sometimes challenging us with things that we don't always want to hear. But doing it in a way that is loving, kind. Like a father disciplines his son, so also does the Lord discipline those whom he loves. And so help us to receive it as an act of compassion, an act of mercy. Not just a preacher getting in our business, but our Heavenly Father trying to give us life abundant that he's super eager to give.

And so give us wisdom to know what to do, courage and faith to do it as we respond in Jesus' name. Amen.