

# (Matthew) Baptism for Life!

by Pat Kenney

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*Pat Kenney's sermon emphasizes the necessity of repentance and personal holiness in preparing for the coming of the Lord.*

**Duration:** 1:08:41

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 7:3-7, Matthew 3:2-4

**Topics:** "Baptism"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the uncertainty of life and the importance of living for God regardless of how long we may live. He urges the audience to make the choice now to surrender their hearts to the Lord and not put off living for Him. The preacher also highlights the danger of being distracted by worldly concerns, such as appearance, and forgetting our true identity as children of God. He references the ministry of John the Baptist as a model of someone who focused on delivering a message rather than being concerned with his outward appearance. The sermon concludes with a call to action, urging the audience to prepare their minds for action and be sober in their commitment to the Gospel.

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## Transcript

Well, God has something for you, and He has His ways of getting you to church, so you can hear what God has to say. And the wise person, when they hear what God has to say, will act upon what the Lord has to say in His Word. So we come to the third chapter in the Gospel of Matthew.

Matthew, chapter 3. Does anybody need Bibles to follow along? Anybody need an extra Bible? We got a stack of them in the back. The slot in the seat in front of you is too skinny to hold one, so we're just going to hand them out. If you need one, just stick your hand up real quick, and we'll fix you up here.

All right. And if perchance you don't have a Bible of your own, you can keep that one and use it. Okay.

We're coming to now the story of John the Baptist, the coming of John the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus, and the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. So we read, in those days, and those days are more specifically laid out to us in Luke's Gospel. So if you look over in Luke, chapter 3, we read that it was in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar.

We read that Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea. Herod was the tetrarch of Galilee. Annas and Caiaphas were high priests.

And the Word of God came to Zacharias, to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. So some 30 years have passed between chapters 2 and 3, in which Jesus lived in Nazareth and worked as a carpenter, and now comes the time for his public ministry to be unfolded. We're told that Zacharias was John the Baptist's father, and Elizabeth was his mother.

That would make John and Jesus second cousins. So there was a relationship with them, and John saw Jesus and knew Jesus as he was growing up. But as we'll see, even in this chapter, he didn't know that Jesus would be the Messiah.

He saw his life, he knew the spotlessness of it, but that revelation comes here in Matthew chapter 3. You remember the story about Zacharias? Zacharias was of the tribe of Levi, from where the tribes of the priests and those who took care of the things of the temple, in Christ's day, there was the temple of the Lord built there in Jerusalem. And only those descendants of Levi could minister in the temple and taking care of the sacrifices and so forth. And it was Zacharias' turn to burn incense on the table of incense, which spoke of the prayers of the people to God and he was an old guy and his wife was old.

They hadn't had any kids and an angel came and spoke to him right there in the holy place. And the angel said to him, don't be afraid Zacharias for your prayer is heard and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth.

And now he describes what his life is going to be like. The angel does. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.

He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And that's an interesting statement because it tells us that there were many in Israel who were Jews who went through the normal feasts and the processes of the temple and yet they didn't know the Lord. They weren't close to the Lord.

Here he said John's ministry is going to turn those who are supposed to be the representatives of God's reaching out to the whole world but are now living for themselves and he's going to turn them back to the Lord. I find the preaching of the gospel often does that even today. That you can be born and raised in a particular denomination and not know the Lord.

You can go through the motions. You know some of the Bible stories. You know a couple of hymns.

You know how to say amen and praise God. But in terms of your life being changed and following Jesus Christ that's like the man in the moon. You're just like everybody else and you don't make waves.

And I think the preaching of the gospel does that today. It draws people out of their sin or out of their religious complacency and into a place of fire. Into a place where God is at work in their life.

Do you know that God wants to work in and through your life? And most people that come here I say, do you want God to work in and through your life? And they go, amen, yes, of course. I go, well, are you ready for the fire? And sometimes they think fire is enthusiasm but fire is much more than enthusiasm. Fire is a cleansing and a purging.

And we'll see that in this chapter. That that's what God wants to do. He wants to clean out the old.

Clean out the stuff that is getting in the way of what he wants. What is a holy walk? How do you bear fruit for the kingdom? God has a work of cleansing that he does in us. So this was going to be John's ministry to Israel.

And he will go before him. That is, he'll go before the promised Messiah. He will go before him as his forerunner in the spirit and the power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

So after 400 years of prophetic silence, there was no prophet in the nation of Israel for 400 years. And now, out in the wilderness of Judea, here is John. And he's proclaiming.

Here's the message after 400 years of silence. He's not politically correct. He's not worrying about who he's going to offend.

He says, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. John's message was a call to repentance. Some people think that repentance is mostly about feelings, especially feeling sorry for your sin.

Now, it is wonderful to feel sorry about your sin. But repent is not a feelings word. It has nothing to do with feelings.

Some people think, oh, well, you know, you get busted. Oh, I repent. I'm sorry.

Oh, I'm just so sorry. And then two hours later, you're back doing the same thing. That's not repentance.

David Guzik says, Jesus told us to make a change of the mind, not merely to feel sorry for what we have done. So repentance speaks of a change of direction, not a sorrow of the heart. It means change.

Change of mind, change of heart, change of direction. Now, a question has been asked, is repentance something we must do before we can come to God? Some say yes, some say no. I say yes and no.

There you go. Yes and no. Repentance does not describe something we must do before we come to God.

It describes what coming to God is like. It describes what it's like. If you are in New York, and I tell you to come to Los Angeles, I don't really need to say, leave New York and come to Los Angeles.

To come to Los Angeles is to leave New York. And if I haven't left New York, I certainly haven't come to Los Angeles. Is that pretty simple? That's what repentance means.

Get out of New York. No. You're from New York.

I'm not trying to offend at all. Some of you are like, we're glad to get out of LA and come to Escondido. We can't come to the kingdom of heaven unless we leave our sin and our self-life.

Did you get that? We can't come to the kingdom of heaven unless we leave our sin and our self-life. As we see throughout the gospel of Matthew, the kingdom of heaven is referring to the reign and the rule of Jesus. And it speaks continually about our relationship that if Jesus is ruling, if he is Lord of our lives, then that means that our lives are submitted to him.

We don't say, praise the Lord. Jesus is Lord. And then go off and do everything opposite what would please the Lord.

That doesn't make sense. But if you're going to say that Jesus is Lord, that implies that he's your king and you are his subject and you're going to follow after him. John's contemporaries thought that the kingdom of heaven meant exclusive privileges and their rule over the heathen, over the Gentiles.

They had all but lost the thought that it meant first God's rule over their own wills. Does God rule over your will today? Is your heart and desire to please the one who made you, to please the one who sacrificed himself for you, the one who made the way possible for you to go to heaven because you were going to hell because of your sin and your trespasses? And Christ came and lived a holy, perfect life that he might be the perfect sin-bearer and he died to bear your sin and mine because I couldn't bear it myself. I couldn't wipe away the stain of my sin through my own efforts, through New Year's resolutions, through even being pressured by law to be good because, you know, if whoever's pressuring you is stronger than you, you'll submit until they're not looking, right? Then when they're not looking, the old sin nature just kind of comes up.

Jesus died for me and for you that we now know that we are not our own anymore. We've been bought with the price of his blood. When I said I surrender all, Lord, I surrender my life to you.

You died for me. I choose today to follow you. Then from that point on, Jesus is my king.

And if I choose to go my own way, I am in rebellion to my king. So either we're following the Lord this morning or we're in rebellion to him. And the word of John would be to us, repent.

If you're not following, if you're allowing all kinds of other things to get in the way between you and the Lord, there's a very simple thing. You don't need therapy. You don't need drugs.

What you need to do is to make a choice today. And that choice is to follow Jesus and to turn from and leave New York and get over to L.A. in that sense. Leave sin and begin to walk in the fullness that God has for you.

Don't negotiate with sin. Don't make excuses for sin. Leave it.

And I often wonder what part of leave don't we understand? John was going to wake them up from their religious slumber. And he wouldn't be very subtle. He wouldn't be very reserved.

He wouldn't be very politically correct. And so we read in verse 3, This is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord and make his path straight. In a word, get ready.

The king is coming. Get ready. The word here is drawn from an oriental custom of sending persons on their journeys ahead of kings to level the roads and make them more passable.

Get ready. The king is coming. And in a spiritual sense, he was also speaking to them to prepare their minds, to prepare the minds of men to give the Messiah a fit reception and secure his blessings.

Prepare the way of the Lord. Get ready. The king is coming.

So John himself was clothed in camel's hair. It's just thinking about that. He's not clothed in the silk garments and the bejeweled cloaks and so forth of the priests and the leaders of the day.

Camel's hair, a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. He ate grasshoppers. And that's what a locust is, basically.

And interestingly, it is one of the clean animals of the Old Testament. It was not against the dietary laws of Judaism to eat locusts. High in protein, I guess.

But it's not the kind of guy you'd see, you know, asking to handle your daughter in marriage. You know, he's sitting there on the couch with locust legs hanging out. And, you know, it's not a real pretty picture.

But, you know, he didn't care. It wasn't about what he looked like. And that's what it so distracts.

Don't looks distract us. You can get so occupied with how you look that you totally forget who you are. You totally forget the person that God made you.

Oh, I'm too tall. I'm too short. I'm too fat.

I'm too skinny. I got this. I don't, you know, this, that.

We're always worrying about what we look like. There's TV shows on what to look like and what not to look like. And you just can get so wrapped up.

And John didn't care. He had a message. And that's what spoke.

Jesus said of John in Luke 7, 25, What did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in king's courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, and I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before your face who will prepare your way before you.

For I say to you, here's Jesus talking, I say to you, among those born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist. So he's taking all of the Old Testament prophets and he's looking at John and he's saying, There hasn't been a greater prophet. But that wasn't the last of his statement there.

He finished it up and looking at his people and he said, But he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. Now that was prophetic of you and I. A prophecy of you and I who is least in the kingdom of God. Jesus said this in Matthew 13, 16.

He said, But blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear. For assuredly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see and didn't see it and to hear what you hear and didn't hear it. These prophets that we read of in the Old Testament, they were looking forward to what you and I experience today.

To know the Messiah. To be a people who don't have a heart of stone, but have a heart of flesh. A heart that is alive to God.

People born again where God rules. So many of these prophets, as they were given to Israel, had the very difficult task of calling them back to God when the whole nation was going just the opposite way. They weren't popular.

You know, you come down, walk down the street and they go, Oh no, here comes the prophet. It wasn't, How you doing, pastor, reverend? Please come in. It was, Oh no.

And the oh no was because they were in sin. They weren't walking as God's people as they had promised to walk. And so God sent the prophets to get in their face and to deal with them.

And so they prophesied of the judgment of God of sin and the work of the Messiah and the ultimate rule in the kingdom age. And it was always a call to get right. To turn from their wickedness.

Many of the prophets, Jeremiah, one of them, never saw one person turn. He's called the weeping prophet. He was the prophet of Jerusalem before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it.

He was in the last throes of that holy city and he had to live through it. In 1 Peter 1 verse 10, we read, Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you. That's us.

The grace has come to us. The unmerited, undeserved favor of God has come to us. And by the work of the Spirit we've received and we've been born again and filled with God's Spirit and He's changing us.

They looked forward to that. They searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves but to us, they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things which angels desire to look to.

And look at now the response. Here's John out in the wilderness going, Repent! Change! The kingdom of heaven is at hand. And it says, Then Jerusalem, all Judea, we're back to Matthew 3, verse 5, Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to Him.

They went out to Him and were baptized by Him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. He didn't go into Jerusalem and set up a church. He went out into the desert.

And I don't know who He was preaching to first. But it didn't take long before the crowds began coming. And what a message! What a message! I mean, what kind of response do you think we'd get if we advertised in the North County Times? And we said, Come to Calvary Chapel, Escondido, where Pastor Pat can get in your face about your sin.

How many of you would cut that one out of the paper and say, Ooh, I can't wait. I can't wait. But you know, there is something very interesting about revival, about moves of God.

Moves of God happen when sin is dealt with squarely. The moves of God happen where sin is intolerated. We don't try to pacify it and make it like it's not important.

Revival happens when the blood of Christ is preached. The work of Christ on the cross for lost sinners is proclaimed. And that's when you see the move of God.

And there was a move of God happening in the wilderness of Judea. And I pray there's a move of God on the west end of Escondido. And that it will continue until the Lord comes back.

So they all come out to him, and they're baptized in the Jordan, a baptism of repentance. They're realizing that they need to change, and they're confessing their sins in biblical typology, the river Jordan is a type of death. Thus the baptism in the river Jordan was a sort of death to the old life.

In other words, it was a change. Some today say they have come to Christ, and yet as you look at their life, there is no change. They're still doing the same things they did before they were saved.

There's no transformation, only a conforming to this world. And the reality is that repentance is empty. Peter in his epistle, 1 Peter 1.13 says, Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind.

You go, what? What are loins of your mind? In those days, they wore the long robes, the tunics, if you will. And when you went to work or you had to run, you had to gird them up. You had a girdle or a sash, and you'd cinch it up so your legs would be free to go.

That's the illustration. The NIV translates it, Therefore, prepare your minds for action. We just don't want to come to church to have a feel-good buzz for, you know, an hour and a half, and then go back and there's no change.

What good is that? Who needs that? Go down to Barnes & Noble. There's plenty of books you can read that can give you a momentary little, you know, make you feel good. But the gospel wasn't given to make you feel good.

It was given to change you. And if you're not changed, you don't know the gospel. Therefore, prepare your minds for action, Peter said.

Be sober. Okay, we can pause there for a minute. Anybody not know what sober means? I think we all know what sober means, don't we? It means we have a clear mind and it's not clouded by any other stimuli.

It's not clouded with drugs. It's not clouded with alcohol. It's not clouded with pornography.

It's a clear mind. Now he says prepare your minds for action. In other words, you can't have action if you're not sober.

Be sober and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. Be holy, separated unto God, separated from the things of this world where they aren't going to be possessing you and choking you, to be holy in all your conduct because it is written, because God says, be holy for I am holy.

Now if God said that to us, that must mean that practical personal holiness is possible. And I think we have come to an age where we just don't follow that anymore. We think that is too archaic.

It is too puritanical. It's not for the real world, but God transcends the real world. And God says, be holy for I am holy.

Thus we as believers must be people who have a passion for holiness. And if whatever needs to change or get flushed down the toilet or burned in the bonfire or trashed, whatever you got to do that's getting in the way of personal holiness, would you have the courage to do it? To take the step, to start a new habit. I was reading this morning in a little volume I picked up this week from Pastor Tony, as a matter of fact.

Thank you, Tony. You've all heard of Oswald Chambers' My Utmost for His Highest? Well, this is a sequel to it. Still higher for his highest.

And you don't see it around very much. And I was looking at the devotion for today. And the title of it was Habit Forming, Character Building.

Can I read it to you? Because I think it's from 2 Peter 1. Always distinguish between the defects of a growing life and the vices of a mature life. Be as merciless as God can make you with the vices of a mature life. But be endlessly patient with the defects of a growing life.

A young life is always in chaos. But there is one main trend coming out all the time. And that trend can be garrisoned by intercessory prayer.

God never makes character. God puts into us the disposition of His Son. And on that basis, we have to form character.

As we form the habit of doing things in accordance with the disposition of Jesus Christ, we are backed by inward supplies of God's grace. Every habit begins with difficulty. And I think in context here, he's meaning every good habit begins with difficulty.

Habit is a mechanical process of which we have ceased to become conscious. You know, when something becomes a habit, you just do it. You don't have to think about it.

It's just an unconscious reaction. A man who is right with God does the right thing instinctively. We're told to add to our faith with virtue.

These things do not emerge until we so form the habit of doing them that they become characteristic of our lives. But I appreciate what Oswald Sanders said there about habit being a mechanical process. And just as the bad habits that folks might have started with a choice and a repetition of that choice so that it became a bad habit, there are godly habits that you can learn and that you can grow in.

And you can start today by making that right choice. Turning from sin and turning to Christ and following after him. As we move on, we'll see a group of people that were not interested in inward change that changed their outward actions.

They weren't interested in that. But only looking good outwardly while their hearts were still full of evil. And God searches our hearts, folks.

We can impress people when we come into church. We can say the right things. We can carry a three-pound Bible and have the bumper stickers.

But is our heart right before God? Only God knows that. Only God really knows that. And the measure of a person, the measure of a person's character is not who you are when you're here.

It's who you are when you're by yourself. What kind of a godly man or woman or boy or girl are you when you're by yourself? Or is the only time you think about God is when you're drugged to church? Now, I'm not saying, I'm not mad at you guys. I know I'm sounding stern.

And I'm not mad at you. But I am mad at lethargy. I am mad at laziness.

I am mad at compromise. Because I see it's so choking, the work that God wants to do in His people. Do we dare to be a people who can burn out for Jesus? It doesn't matter what else.

A people that can be on fire for the Lord. And that's not just emotion. That's a work of God in our lives.

Does the fire, is the fire of God burning anything in you today? I hope so. Because I might suggest, if you can't smell anything singin', you need to get on your knees. And cry, search me, oh God.

And know my heart. Because I don't think repentance is something you do just once. I believe repentance is a lifestyle.

It's the way we live. Not just something we feel, something we do. So, when He saw many of the Pharisees and the Sadducees coming to His baptism, He recognized them.

But not like we might do today. You know, if a bunch of the leaders came today and were sittin' in the front row, you know, the leaders of the Catholic Church, the leaders of the Anglican Church, the leaders of this thing or that thing, and they were all in their regalia and they were all sittin' there in the front row, the typical response might be, I'd like to welcome our esteemed guests, the Reverend so-and-so, da-da-da, da-da-da, da-da-da. Well, here comes the Pharisees, who were the legalists of the day.

They had interpreted the Ten Commandments with more than 600 other commandments, and they prided themselves in keeping every one of them at the expense of ministering to the people and of caring for the people. Then you have the Sadducees, who wore religious garb, but they didn't believe in the spiritual or the supernatural. And these are the leaders, and they all come out to the side of the Jordan, where John is speaking, and he looks up, and he sees them.

And what does he say to them? Verse 7, Brood of vipers! Man, there was no fear in this guy. I could imagine the crowd going, Oh! What are you doing, man? You know, they're gonna kill you, man. You don't mess with these people.

And eventually, he was killed. Had his head chopped off. But to the very end, he remained steadfast.

And he didn't compromise. I know that the same thing will happen with you and me, as we speak boldly. Not just to impress people with how bold we are.

You know, because I've heard some preaching that is just, it's just yelling. It's just anger. And I get excited, and my voice raises.

I don't want to bawl out and just condemn, but I want to speak the truth. And I want to be able to lead people into the truth and into the freedom that they can have in Christ Jesus. And when people are in bondage, when they're clouded, sometimes you have to, you know, blow away the clouds and the distractions.

And that's what John was doing. He wasn't being politically correct. He called them a brood of vipers.

Now, vipers are poisonous rattlesnakes, and these are baby rattlers. And if you know anything about poisonous snakes, you know that baby poisonous snakes are the most poisonous. The intensity of the venom in a baby rattler is far stronger than an adult rattler.

And he calls them a brood. You're like a bunch of baby snakes. Vermin.

You know what I mean? Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, here's what you need to do. Bear fruits worthy of repentance. And this has been the message of the prophets over the

centuries past.

For example, Jeremiah 7, 3, Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings. Change, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Don't trust in these lying words.

Oh, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. And this was at a time when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians were about to destroy Jerusalem. And Jeremiah warned them that this was the judgment of God on the sin of the nation.

And if they wanted to survive, they needed to go to Babylon. Don't fight this king. And then the false prophets would say, Nothing can happen to us because we're in the temple.

We've got the temple, the beautiful temple with the Holy of Holies. This is where the Lord dwells. Nobody's going to mess with us here.

And so they talk about their temple and their tradition, but their hearts weren't right before God. And that temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's armies. He said, If you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, if you don't oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and you don't shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place and in the land I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

See, it illustrates in the Old Testament, and John has illustrated in here, bear fruits worthy of repentance, that real repentance will show itself in life. It has to be a matter of living repentance, not just talking repentance. And I think as Christian people, as church-going folk, we know how to talk the talk.

But I can't tell you how many people I've had to counsel over the years that have been talking the talk, but their walk's a mess. Their personal relationships are shattered. The habits that are possessing them and controlling them are overwhelming.

The talk isn't what does it. It's the walk. And you got to make those steps.

You got to make the choice to walk after Him. Jesus said, Come, follow Me. He didn't say come.

He didn't say, Sit there and admire Me. He didn't say, Stand and have good thoughts about Me. He said, Follow Me.

And where did Jesus go? Where did He end up? In His physical life, He ended up at the cross. He said, The Son of Man doesn't have a place to lay His head. Now, that's a radical thing when you say, I'm following Jesus.

Really? If Jesus says, Get up and go, and I want you to move to Belize next week and teach in the school down there for the next five years. Oh man, God hasn't showed me that. But you know, that's... How else... How do you think the Spirit of God moves? You know, when you say, Lord, I love you.

I want to serve you. I want to be used of you. Lord, show me how I can be used of you.

And then you hear somebody say, We need teachers for junior hires and nursery workers. Ha ha ha. And we go, Anything but that.

And then God has to start going down the list to see what you're flexible enough for. And I want to be Gumby before the Lord, you know? I want to be Gumby, Lord. However you want Him.

Not Gumby to the world, you know, but to Jesus. However you want to lead me. However you want to guide me.

Whatever I need to get rid of. Take it. I don't want anything to get in the way of what you want to do in my life.

So John is dealing with their self-righteousness. He's saying, Your lives aren't changed at all. Show some fruit.

Show some fruit. And don't think to say to yourselves, because John already knew what they were thinking. We have Abraham as our father.

And John says, I say to you, God's able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. You see, they were trusting in what's called generational salvation. The thinking went, Because I'm related to Abraham.

Because I'm a Jew, I have salvation. And we can probably look at how it is in our day. People might say, Well, you know, I'm going to heaven.

Because my parents were good Christians. Or because I'm an American. Or because I'm a Lutheran.

Or I'm a Catholic. Or I'm a Baptist. God would say, What's your life showing? And who is your life showing that you're following? You don't get to heaven by being baptized as a kid in some denomination.

You get to heaven by laying down your life to follow Jesus Christ. Hello? You get to heaven by following Jesus. Now you go, Well, that's not grace.

Oh, yes it is. Grace is undeserved, unmerited favor. We deserve to go to hell.

Jesus intervened in our lives. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. That's grace.

But we need to know that everlasting life, this new life that God gives us, isn't just an insurance policy. You know, it's not just something, Okay, you got saved. Put it in your back pocket.

When you die, you go up to St. Peter and go, See, I accepted Christ in 1984 at Calvary Escondido. No. And I hope, you know, if you did, I'm not saying, No, you're not saved.

But I'm saying that it's not just one thing. And I'm not speaking that you have to get saved over and over and over again. But the call to repentance is over and over and over again because God wants you to be changed.

He doesn't want you to stay the same with the same habits and the same problems and the same weights of carnality and materialism in the flesh. He wants you to be free and bear fruit worthy of repentance. Fruit that looks like repentance.

Their lives and ours were to bear good fruit. But look what he says in verse 10 to these Pharisees, to these phonies, if you will, that even now the axe is laid to the root of the tree. Therefore, every tree which doesn't bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Their lives and ours are to bear good fruit. True repentance is evidenced in a changed life that does not just give lip service to good character, but is really good. It's really good.

And what are some of those fruits? Well, we're told in Galatians chapter 5, the fruit of the spirit is love. God's love. Obvious and flowing into your life.

In other words, other people will look at you and go, man, they're a loving, that's a real loving person. And, you know, I'll tell you, I don't know a lot about them, but this I can tell. They really love others.

See, that's the idea of godly fruit. Others can tell. It's not just what I do in my closet.

It's others can tell what's going on. So what is the fruit of love? Well, eight different things. Joy, peace, long-suffering.

Patience, that's what it means. Patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control. See, these are all fruit.

And you know a tree by its fruit. Amen? I mean, you go to the orchards around, you can tell. There's an orange, there's a lemon, there's a pomegranate, there's a grapefruit.

You know, you can tell by the fruit. And if any of you have ever worked orchards, you know that when they quit bearing fruit, what do you do? You chop them down, and oftentimes you graft in a better, a healthier, a younger stock. And then you get fruit again.

Any of you have attended a garden? How many of you like roses? Some of you like receiving roses. Some of you like growing roses. But you know, when you're growing roses, and those rose bushes have been putting it out for you.

I mean, they have been working all year long, all season long to give you the beautiful, beautiful color, wonderful aroma. And then come January, you go out into the garden with your snips, and you go, I appreciate you. And you cut it off to a stub.

I know some people who to this day, they just can't bring themselves to doing that. They go, I'll kill it. I know I'll kill it.

But if you've raised roses, you can talk to Pastor Richard about this. He's got some beautiful roses in his garden. You have to cut them back.

Because you can't get the continued good new fruit if you're not cut back. And a lot of times that's how we are. You know, God wants to deal with us.

God wants to work in our life. You know, you're challenged by the word of God. You're challenged by biblical exposition.

You know, God's word is getting to you. But it sometimes doesn't feel good because there's a cutting going on. There's a pruning that's taking place.

And why is that? To punish you? To make you feel bad? No! It's to cut off that which isn't barren fruit anymore so you could bloom even greater and bring forth even tastier fruit down the road. That's why we come together. That's why we go to the word.

That's why we dare to say, Search my heart, Lord. See if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way of everlasting life. Jesus said, Every branch in me that doesn't bear fruit, he takes away.

Remember he said, I am the vine and my father is the vine dresser. He's the gardener. And any branches that aren't barren fruit, snip, snip, snip, snip.

And I don't believe that's speaking of losing your salvation. But it is speaking about God doing a work in your life so that you can continue to be bearing good fruit, so that God can use you to touch others, so that you can be sober-minded. And when God says, Move and go, you're already so in sync with him that it's a natural flow of God's revealed will in your life.

God has so much he wants to do with us. And you got to understand when trials come and things are difficult, it's not that God hates you, but that's when you need to tune in and say, Lord, what do you want to teach me through this? How am I to grow in this? The psalmist said in Psalm 1 3, that he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither and whatever he does shall prosper. And that's what God wants.

He wants us to be like trees planted by the rivers of water where we're growing. Psalm 92 13, Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. And I like verse 14 there, They shall still bear fruit in old age and they shall be fresh and flourishing.

How many of you are technically senior citizens? You're over 55. You know what? God says more fruit, not less, not less. Yeah, the bodies are starting to wear out and get more achy and tired and pains and diseases, but the fruit of your life doesn't need to wane.

That can just continue to grow. And, you know, we have a lot of folks that work with the seniors ministries going and visiting the different senior homes and towns and they can tell you, you know, there is some elderly folks that they're ministering to that are the sweetest, most joyful to be around. Even when they got some dementia, you know, they're just loving people.

And then you got others that are in the same situation and they are so bitter and angry and resentful and mad. And I said, Lord, I don't want to, I don't want to end up like that. Because the choices you make now and the character that's developed in you now, if it's godly character, it's only going to grow.

It's only going to continue to bear fruit. There's a certain species of date palms that I read about that the older they get, the more fruit they bear. They never slack off.

They never slack off. They just keep bearing fruit. I don't know how they die.

Maybe when they're all top heavy and the wind just finally, that's it, you're done bearing fruit and now you go home. That's how I want it to be in my life. When I'm done bearing fruit, I don't want to go into a slide.

You know, I just want to walk into glory. So God do that in us. Are you up there in the years? And are you whining? Talk to my wife.

I've been whining lately. You know, I don't like aches and pains and having physical problems and stuff. I don't like that.

Amen. But God promises me that as I walk in Him and as I lay down myself to Him, that there's going to be increased fruitfulness. And that's the kind of people we want to be.

If you're a young person now, make those choices while you're young to serve the Lord with all your heart and mind and soul and strength. Because then you can know that as you get older, that's going to determine, that's going to describe the kind of character you have. Don't think that, well, I'm a kid and I'm just going to do what I want or I'm a teenager or I'm a young adult and now is my time to have fun.

And then when I get old, then I'll find God. Then I'll get religion. Then I'll start getting serious about the Lord.

Probably, no, you won't. Because there's a hardening that takes place. When you continue to choose not to respond to what God is doing in your life, you get harder.

You just get harder and harder and harder. And I believe God's given us this passage as we go, as we're in our chapter-by-chapter, book-by-book study, that he brings us to this chapter for a purpose. We're not looking at just ancient history because there's a present-day application of this to us here at Calvary Escondido, to me as Pat Kenny, to you as whoever you are, that God wants us to be bearing fruit.

And He wants us to be walking wholly unto Him. Failure to truly repent is going to surely result in judgment. This is a warning for people of all ages.

Don't let a hard heart happen. The judge is standing at the door. It's not that far away.

How long are you going to live? Does anybody know? Have you gotten some special notice from God that says you're going to live for 60 years or 40 years? I mean, you don't know. You just don't know how long you're going to live. So make the choice now to live for God.

If you only have five days or if you have five years or five decades, live them for the Lord. If you put off living for the Lord, you're only going to get harder. And it's not going to be easier when you get older to turn away from those things.

Choose now. Choose today. And I would have to say that there's not a one of you here nor watching on TV if you've lasted this long with the broadcast that if you were to today call upon the Lord and surrender your heart to Him, that God wouldn't hear you.

He would. You wouldn't be watching. You wouldn't be sitting here if there wasn't still a spark, if there wasn't still a work that God could do in your life.

My challenge to you is will you let God do that? Would you call upon the Lord today and let Him do that work? Now John says in verse 11, I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry, and he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. A lot of people want to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. They don't like the fire part.

You know what I'm talking about, folks? I mean, it's one thing to be able to speak in tongues and to have words of wisdom and words of knowledge and miracles and so forth, and that's exciting. And it's real. Those are real gifts that are given.

But a lot of times we get our eyes more on the gifts than the giver of the gifts. And we look more for the power or the pizzazz or the rush than we do for the daily, consistent walking after the Lord. Fire here is not wild Pentecostal emotionalism.

And if you're from a Pentecostal background, I'm not meaning to insult you. I'm just trying to use that word to describe that it's not just running down the aisles. It's not flopping on the floor.

It's not barking like a dog. You know, it's not just these wild emotional things. And then, whoa, the Spirit of God really moved today.

That's not what the fire is. The fire is a purifying of the person. The Holy Jesus coming to baptize with the Holy Spirit is an immersion, an immersion in the will of God, an immersion in the life of the Spirit where God now can do what He desires in your life.

And if there's sin, if there's something dead, something not bearing fruit, He can take it out. He can burn it right out. Here's the description of the fire, what He really means by it in verse 12.

His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He'll thoroughly clean out His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn, but He'll burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. See, this is speaking of that purifying process of our lives through the Holy Spirit. The fire is that which consumes the chaff in order that we might be refined and purified where the impurities in our life are removed that the purposes of the Holy Spirit, this is the purpose of the working of the Holy Spirit in us, the removal of those impurities in our lives that we might be conformed to the image of Jesus.

So what would it burn out? It'd burn out anger and strife and those areas of the flesh. And what would it leave? Wholesome grain. This is the process they used in those days.

We don't remember it now because we just go to the store and buy a loaf of bread or a cake mix or whatever. But in those days, they had to go out to the field and they'd have to reap the wheat or the oats or whatever, and then they'd bring them to their threshing floor and they'd spread them all out and they'd roll big stones or have their oxen stomp on it and all of that pressure would release and separate the grain from the chaff that surrounded it. Then they'd take a scoop and throw it up in the air and then have a winnowing fan.

It was like, you know, some of you have those in your houses. You know, they're a wall decoration. They're like a big fan.

You can get them at Pier 1. You know, those big fans. And you could just... And if you were to throw that thing, you'd generate a whoosh and that whoosh blows away the chaff. And this morning, you're getting a whoosh.

The Word of God is a whoosh to blow away those things that you can't make a loaf of bread or a tasty cake or a tortilla or whatever it might be. I'm hungry now. I know.

So are you. But this was the process. And then they take the chaff and burn it.

They burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Chaff's the residue. Chaff is the worthless residue of a wheat stalk after the kernel of grain has been removed.

These proud and unrepentant leaders are just as useless to God. I just don't want that said of any of us that we're useless to God. So I would ask you, how's God using you? Are you desiring for God to use you? And if you would say, yes.

Oh, I want the Lord to use me. Then be prepared for the whoosh. Be prepared for the winnowing.

That winnowing fan starting to blow away those things. And you know, maybe this afternoon you just need to get on your face before the Lord. And when you get back up, you look at your book rack.

You look at your magazine rack. You look at the kind of stuff that you allow in your house. And you go, gee, I wonder if Jesus would really like to sit here and watch this with me.

And it might be time to allow the whoosh to blow through your house. But I would ask it to first blow through your heart. First to blow through your mind.

And then repent. Change. Remember, repentance is change.

It's not just sinning and going, oh, I'm sorry I sinned. Now, if you're sorry, you can be sorry for the next 30 years that you sin, and you can keep on sinning and keep on saying, I'm sorry. But I believe Jesus died on the cross for your sins and mine, that sin should not have dominion over us.

That we are to yield our members. Romans 6, we're to yield our... Yeah, Romans 6. We're to yield our members unto righteousness, not unto unrighteousness. That's a choice.

What are you going to yield to today? Yield to the Lord. Yield to the Lord. The baptism of Jesus in the Spirit is a dying to self, a cleansing of motives.

It's a baptism of purity. And again, many people today want the power of the Spirit, but they don't want a changed lifestyle. So the fire of God may make me shout, but it'll be, ouch.

Oh, that's hot. That burns. That's the kind of shout we should be looking to.

Not just an emotional outburst shout, but I want the Lord to be working on me. You know, I've known the Lord for 35 years, 34 years. And I don't want to retire from knowing the Lord.

You know, I don't want to say, well, you know, I've put in my time. I've served God. I've served God's people.

Now it's my time. It's time for me. Time for me to kick back.

Pastor Richard said this to me a couple years ago. He said, you know, I want to be like Caleb. He says, you know, Caleb was already 80 years old when he hit the promised land, and he asked for the toughest territory.

Right on, Caleb. Right on. And I looked at Richard, and I go, man, you're making me tired.

You know? And it was a season in my life where I was just tired. Wore out. Figured I needed a break.

I needed more Jesus. And I've got more Jesus. And I want you to have more Jesus so that we can live our lives for Him and not compromise with the things of the world.

That's why Jesus came. Jesus is about to begin His ministry. He's going to be baptized by John to fully identify with fallen man.

Jesus didn't need to get baptized, but He's fulfilling all righteousness, and He's showing that He's the perfect, the perfect one that we identify with. And so we get baptized today, but it's an identification with Christ. It is repentance as well, but it's also, it's more than that.

It's that identification that as Christ died, we die to the old man. And as Christ was raised from the dead, we raise to walk in newness of life. We identify with Christ's death and Christ's resurrection.

And that's a sweet life. That's a powerful life. That's a life that is going to impact a world that so desperately needs Jesus.

May we be those people that follow in His steps. And when He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water. Verse 16, And behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

And suddenly a voice came from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. We'll pick it up there next week as we get into the beginning of the Lord Jesus' public ministry. So Matthew's gospel, the rule of Christ, His reign in our lives.

And oh, what an important foundation for the rest of our study, amen? That God wants us to be changed. And that's a choice that we make. And then we have all the power of heaven behind that choice.

But make it over and over and over and over again. Repentance is a lifestyle, not just a one-time buzz. May God make us that kind of people.

Father God, we pray right now that You would do that work in us, Lord. Lord, we would choose today to allow Your winnowing fan to blow through and to burn out, Lord, those things that are not of You. We sing, Change my heart, O God.

Make it more like You. You are the potter. I am the clay.

Mold me, shape me. This is what I pray. Thank You, Lord.

Thank You, Lord. Father, I thank You for each person here this morning. Thank You that we can grow together in You.

Lord, we don't want to grow in religion. We even don't want to grow in just Calvary Chapel. We want to grow as a people who are following Jesus.

And we thank You for this ministry. We thank You for the privilege of serving You, Lord, and learning of You. God, as Your people today, we want to walk obediently.

We don't want to just go to the temple of the Lord and, oh, I'm this, and, oh, I go to that church, therefore I'm okay. We want to be walking with You that our lives would bear fruit worthy of repentance and that even in our old age we'll keep bearing good fruit. So, God, have Your way in us and use us for Your glory this week and continue to teach us, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Can we stand together, please? I don't know if I'm going to be able to talk much this evening, but we will eat well, okay? So, you newcomers, if you're new to the church, I'd love to spend time with you. Pray for my voice that it'll hold up for tonight.

And we look forward to acquainting you a little bit more with the background of how we got here, how this ministry came to be, and to give those of you who are new to the church an opportunity to interact a little bit with some of the leadership in the church. And we're not going to come in robes and jewels, and we probably aren't going to come with camel hair either, and we will not probably serve locusts unless you

can find some bonies or something, I don't know. But we do want to grow together in the love of Christ.

And so I would encourage all of you, as you go on with your week, to look for opportunities to serve others, to ask God to bear that good fruit, to bring forth that good fruit, to recognize that it may require cutting, that the Lord may need to cut back, may need to whoosh, you know, some of the chaff away. Don't be afraid of His fire. It's a purifying fire, and it'll help you to grow like you've never grown before.

Walk in the love of the Lord. Love Him, love those who are around you. Christ has forgiven you, so you should forgive one another.

And let those fruit, that fruit that we were talking about today, be evident in your life. May God richly bless you and keep you in His love as you follow after Him.

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