

# Special Messages from 2015

## Holy Incompetence

Unedited Transcript

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Good morning, guys. It's great to see you. Pat, thanks for praying and getting us started here and it is very exciting to think about people not having to bump their chairs into each other when they get up from their desks. This opportunity for a new headquarters building, a place where we can bring our guys in from around the country and really have a dedicated, high-quality place that we can train and equip guys to send them back out there and really bring about revival through the church in America and even beyond is an exciting thing. I really join Pat in just coveting your participation in that and we're so excited. I've been in Michigan this week dealing with some family issues and my brother-in-law hopefully will never watch this Bible study so that I can talk about him for a second.

My sister was asking me some questions about some frustrations she was having with him. Why wouldn't he listen to her, was what it came down to, which is a conversation that every single one of our wives have had with somebody else about us, right? "Why won't he listen to me?" What I was trying to help her understand was that it wasn't really the fact that he wouldn't listen to her. It was the way that she was talking to him, and she was attacking him. She didn't think she was, but she was attacking him at a place where most men have very consistently, in my experience, have an idol. That idol is the idol of competency. Men hate it. I hate it when you question my competency. The way that you know you're questioning my competency or the way my wife, for instance, would know that she's questioning my competency is that I would answer her with something like this or I would at least think it, "Don't talk to me like I'm a ..." "child." See, you all know. When you think that, when you think, "Why is this person talking to me like this? Why are they treating me like a child?" Right now, in fact I could just say this and we could all go home, but you can't. In your head, what you got to realize is, "Oh, the reason that this is bothering me so much is because I feel like this person is attacking me at the level of my competency. Am I competent? Am I capable?" I see this in the church too. We want to be competent at being spiritual. We want to be spiritually competent, so we do these things like we have a quiet time. We go to church. We learn to share our faith. We memorize Bible verses. We talk about tithing and we support an orphan in a third-world country. We do all these things. We're looking around. We're trying to be spiritually competent by doing all of these things.

I think that it's a danger for us because we can get caught up on this spiritual treadmill where you're constantly just trying to keep up. You're trying to get more spiritually fit. You do good at one point so you get your quiet time going and so you crank up the speed a little bit. "Oh, I'm going to spend 45 minutes a day instead of 20 minutes a day. That will be better." "Oh, I'm going to read through the Bible in a whole year. Oh, that will make me better. Oh, I'm not to give 10%. I'm going to give 12%. Woohoo." We just keep pushing the incline up a little bit, pushing the speed forward a little bit, thinking that if we just run a little bit faster or run a little bit harder spiritually that we're going to become the kind of men that we want to be. I think this is motivated primarily by a positive thing.

We want to please God, but we also want to show others that we're Christians, that we're spiritual, that we are living correctly. Let me ask you this. How many of you wish you were more consistent in your quiet time? Most of us, right? How many of you wish you were more faithful in your church attendance? How many wish you were more generous with your tithes and offerings? How many wish you were more eloquent in sharing your testimony? How many of you wish you had more Bible verses memorized? All of us, right? There's always a little bit more, a little bit better, a little bit more, a little bit better. It's a treadmill. It just keeps going around and around and around, and frankly, guys, if this is how you're trying to be more spiritual, you're just never going to catch up.

Pat talked about the rat race, right. In the business world, there's the rat race, and you get caught up in success sickness, always wanting to achieve the next goal but it's never enough for you. There's a spiritual rat race, I think, a lot of guys get caught up in as well where they're constantly trying to be a more successful Christian and you're never quite living up to your expectations because there's always something else you could do. There's always another guy out there who seems a little bit holier than you, who seems to have a little bit better marriage than you, that seems to have a little bit better grasp on scripture than you, who's involved in one more thing than you're involved in.

As we end the year here and start thinking about next year, or the guys that are watching this online maybe are watching this at the beginning of the year, I want you to think about positioning your spiritual life for 2016 and I want to help you quit the spiritual rat race. I want you to get off the holy treadmill and I want you to experience the freedom and the power of God in your life without all that activity driving you. For those of you who aren't Christians or maybe you've been avoiding it because you look around and you see guys like us who are always trying to do a little bit more, a little bit better and you're like, "Well, I could never do that." I talked to this guy who's always spouting a Bible verse at me. I could never memorize that many Bible verses. He's always talking about some church thing, "I could never do that."

Let me give you some good news, okay? A life with Christ is not full of rules and unrealistic expectations. I apologize on behalf of all Christian men who have given you that impression. A life with Christ is not full of unrealistic expectations. It's not full of rules. The life of a Christian actually empowers a man to be the kind of man that he knows in his heart he was made to be. Get this. The life of a Christian actually does not require any more effort on your part to be good than you're already expending, and if you're a moral person, it may even require a less energy than you're expending right now to try to be good. If you have a Bible, go ahead and turn to Galatians Chapter 5 and then let me walk us through our outline for this morning. There we go. What we're going to talk about is we're going to talk about holy incompetence. I said we have this idol of competence and we see this in our spiritual life as well.

We want to be spiritually competent, and what I want to invite you to do this morning is to recognize that you are holy, you have a holy incompetence, right? Or you could put a W in front of this and add an L and you could recognize that spiritually you are wholly incompetent, and that's okay. It's not up to you. What we're going to talk about is, first, we're going to talk about being saved by grace. This is something that most of us really, I think, probably get that are in the church. We've heard this message a lot, but we're going to just review this concept just to make sure that everybody's on the same page, and then we're going to talk about how grace continues after you're saved, that grace isn't just about salvation but it's actually about sanctification as well. Then finally, we're going to talk about the power of God that is available to those who believe and follow Christ and how to bring that power to bear in your own life.

First, let's talk about being saved by grace. Now, you've probably heard this phrase or some version of it a thousand times. "We're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone." I have one person mouthing the words over here. We're saved by faith alone. Saved by grace alone, through faith alone, by Christ alone. This comes, this is a synopsis. It's pretty comprehensive. You might say, "Well, where does that phrase come from? Is that a phrase in the Bible?" It's actually not, but there's a verse that says the same things. It's in Ephesians 2, Chapter 8 and 9 from the letter from Paul to the Ephesians. He says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing." "For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing. It's the gift of God, not as a result of works so that no-one may boast." Jesus made this clear.

The other writers like Paul make this clear and I think we all get it. We're saved by grace. It's not our own behavior. It's not our own goodness that saves us in the sight of a holy, perfect God. I don't know about you but I have heard this a ton. Have you heard this a ton? You're saved by grace, right? Everybody understands that. You can't be good enough. You can't work hard enough. You get this, right? Everybody gets this, right? We understand in the sense of our salvation there's this standard of perfection that God has that we can't meet and so because we're not able to match God's holy standard and because God loves us so much that he's not willing to let us perish, he sent his son, Jesus. Jesus measures up to the standard for me, for you, and he pays the penalty for me that was promised in the Garden of Eden.

"If you trust yourself more than you trust me, if you disobey what I tell you to do and do what you want to do instead, I will cut you off," God said. Adam and Eve decided that they were going to trust their own best thinking instead of what God was telling them to do. They were going to disobey what God told them to do, not believe him, let Satan twist his words, and they were cut off. They were cut off from a relationship with God. Adam goes and hides, he's ashamed, he blames the woman, he blames God. We do that, right? Then they are kicked out of the garden. We've been kicked out of the garden too, and we don't live in paradise yet. Christ comes to save us by grace, undeserved. We are undeserving.

Here's where I tend to go off track though and I think a lot of Christians do and frankly I think guys especially go off track here because here's what we go. We go, "Man, God loves me so much. That's incredible. I mean, I've seen The Passion of the Christ. I know what Jesus went through. He got beaten to a pulp and died a horrible death and then raised from the dead and Jesus saves me. God saves me. Hallelujah. Now I'd better measure up to that. I'd better be worthy of God doing that for me. I get it. I'm saved by grace but I'm not sanctified by grace. I'm sanctified. I become more Christ-like." That's what sanctification means, to become more like Christ. "I do that based on my own effort out of a motivation of wanting to please God. But the same thing that happens in the Garden where Adam and Eve don't trust God for his goodness and to save them and now I do, but I still don't trust him enough to change me. That's on me."

What we have to remember is that grace continues. We've got to accept God's grace not just to save us from our sins but also to help us be more like Christ. Look at Galatians 5 and listen to this. Listen to what Paul says to the Galatians here. He says, "For freedom, Christ has set us free. Stand firm therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." Now a yoke, for a Jewish Rabbi, a yoke was a system of teaching that was the way that the Rabbi, that each specific Rabbi interpreted the Old Testament scriptures. When he's saying, "Don't be held by this yoke of slavery," he's talking about thinking that you have to measure up to the law. Jesus said, "Well, my yoke is easy, my burden is light." He said the same thing. Paul's reflecting what Jesus said here when he says, "Don't submit again to a yoke of slavery."

Why is he saying this to the Christians in Galatia? He's saying this because in the Galatian church, there are these people called Judaizers and what they're saying is, "Yeah. You can be saved by Jesus, but you have to be Jewish to be saved by Jesus. You have to be circumcised. You have to observe the dietary laws. You have to live according to all the laws of the Old Testament, of Moses. Rely on those things and then you'll be good enough for God to save you." Paul's not amused. In fact, let's read what he says.

He says, "Look. I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law." Now what he's saying is not that there's anything wrong with circumcision. You can stop shifting uncomfortably in your chairs. What he's saying is that those of you that have not been circumcised, you don't need to go get circumcised just to be good enough for Jesus to save you. That's a yoke of slavery. I don't know about you, but that doesn't sound like a fun activity as an adult male ... in any way, shape or form.

Right? Paul's saying, "You don't need to do that, and by doing that, what you're saying is, 'I have to do something to be good enough for Jesus to save me. I have to do something to be good enough to live this life like Christ.'" Paul's saying, "That's not how it works." In fact, he's a little ticked off. Do you catch the tone here? "Look, I, Paul, say to you. Listen to me. You are severed ..." Do you see the wordplay he's using here? "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law. You have fallen away from grace." Grace continues. "For through the Spirit by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness, for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump."

He's saying, "In the Church, there's just a few of these people saying these things, but it's affecting everyone. I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is, but if I, brother, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case, the offence of the Cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves." Paul is not amused. You know what he's saying, right? If you're going to cut a little off, you might as well just take it all off. Yeah. This is a serious thing for Paul. "You do not have to do these things to measure up to deserve the grace, the love that God lavishes on us." Then let's keep going then.

Let's look at Verse 13. He says, "For then, for you were called to freedom." Now look at this. He starts with, "For freedom, Christ has set you free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit to a yoke of slavery." He goes, "Freedom versus yoke of slavery," right? He describes the slavery. What's the slavery? This adhering to a law and relying on that law to make you good enough. It's not that you shouldn't do good things. It's that if you rely on that, then you're taking God's power on to yourself. Now he goes the other way. He says, "But you were called to freedom, brothers," Verse 13, "only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but through love serve one another, for the whole law is fulfilled in one word, you shall love your neighbor as yourself but if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another."

Paul is saying, "Yeah, you've got freedom but I want you to use that freedom wisely." There's another place where Paul says, "Everything is permissible but everything's not good for me. Everything's not advisable." He's saying, "Yeah, you've got freedom, but I want you to use it well." The watchword of this is how we trust each other. Isn't that interesting? How we treat each other becomes the way that we monitor this. Then in Verse 16 then, he goes on to say this. "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not

gratify the desires of the flesh, for the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do." In the Letter to the Ephesians, Paul also talks about the world, the flesh and the devil. These 3 things are warring against the Spirit of God that lives in us as Christians.

Let's say I'm walking through an airport and I walk into a bookstore and in the bookstore in the airport and it's some other city where nobody's ever going to see me again, right, there's porn magazines up there. Now, I don't want to look at porn magazines, okay, but for some reason there's a voice whispering in my ear, "You're really far away from home. Nobody will ever know. You can do what you want." The world puts a magazine in front of me. My flesh frankly likes pictures of naked women, and then the devil whispers in my ear, "Nobody knows you're here. Nobody knows you're here." Those 3 things, against my willpower, it's really not a contest. Maybe not the first time, maybe not the second time, maybe not the tenth time, but eventually those things are going to wear me down if I'm trying to live out of my own willpower to be good, and I'm going to slip. I'm going to accept.

It's not my willpower that they're fighting against. It's the Spirit of God that they're fighting against. The Holy Spirit lives in me and it's the Holy Spirit that goes that not only do you not want that, "That's stupid, Brett. That's not good for you. You're going to feel terrible and I'm going to give you the power to stand against these dark forces that are pushing you to sin against the Father who loves you and who I love." Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we're able to resist. I got to be honest with you. If it wasn't for the Holy Spirit, I don't know how long I'd last. Longer than you would because I'm a little bit better than you are. You see where that thinking leads you? You almost have to think like that, right? Through the power of the Holy Spirit, grace continues. What is this Holy Spirit? What is this Holy Spirit? Jesus told the disciples in John 14, 16 and 17, he said, "I am sending you another counselor." Now the word "another" is interesting here because it doesn't mean like you and I would say, "Well, there's another guy sitting at my table," right? What he means, when he says "another," he means, "a person who is the same as me." He's the end of his ministry with the disciples, he's getting ready to leave. They're like, "Please don't go anywhere." They don't want Jesus to go anywhere. They're in the upper room. Peter's making all kinds of promises. They don't want Jesus to leave.

Jesus is like, "I got to go, but it's going to be okay. In fact, I need to go so that the Father can send another counselor, another," "advocate" is another word there, another helper is another way that that word could be translated, "who's going to come behind me and I'm present with you physically, but the Holy Spirit will actually live inside of you. So you thought you had it good for the last 3 and a half years because I've been walking around and hanging out with you, and you've had access to me. I'm telling you that this is even better because it's me," because Jesus says, "God, I and the Father are one," right? "But it's me coming to you in the Holy Spirit portion of the Trinity," let's not go down that road, we don't have enough time, "and the Holy Spirit who is just like me is going to be with you always." What a gift. Here's what I want you to think about.

Sometimes, I've heard people say this, like, "Well, if I got to walk around with Jesus, man, I'd have been a good Christian too." You do in a sense walk around with Jesus. You walk around with the Holy Spirit who's just like Jesus. Jesus said it himself. He doesn't leave. Jesus will leave them and go do stuff and then come back. The Holy Spirit doesn't leave us. He's with us always. Who's he for? Peter says in Acts 2:38 at the Pentecost, he's preaching to the crowd that's gathered there, and he says, "Repent and be baptized and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." What does that mean? He's for everyone. He's not just for some of the more Holy Joes in the room. The Holy Spirit is for anyone who will repent and be baptized, in another words, who will come to a place of faith in Christ and live out that faith in their life.

What does the Holy Spirit do then? If he's living in your heart, what does the Holy Spirit do? He wars against the flesh. Like I said before, he's like that voice in the airport bookstore that's holding things at bay, that's giving me victory in areas of my life that I don't have victory in my own power. Here's the thing. The more of those areas in my life that I give to the Holy Spirit, the more victory I have, because in my own strength, I will eventually fail. When I fail, I can tell you, every time that I fail, every time that I sin, it's in an area of my life where I'm trying to do it on my own instead of giving it over to the Holy Spirit and letting the Holy Spirit inhabit that area of my life.

There's a great story. I don't have time to read the part that I want to read to you, but you all know C. S. Lewis's "The Chronicles of Narnia," right?, and so there is this part of the story and the Voyage of the Dawn Treader. I was talking to the guys ... I actually went and got the movie last night and watched the scene. It's much better in the book, but Eustace is a brat in the story. He's us, but he's a brat and he gets himself separated from the group of people that are on this voyage of the Dawn Treader, which is a ship, and he finds himself in a dragon's den of a dragon that has just died. His fear turns to delight when he sees all the gold and all the treasures that the dragon has collected and so he slips one of the dragon's bracelets up on to his arm, and he thinks to himself, "I don't need those other people. With all this gold, I'll be rich. I can take care of myself."

He falls asleep and when he wakes up, he is turned into a dragon. For a moment, he goes, "Well, this is cool. I'm a dragon. Nobody's ever going to pick on me again. Nobody's ever going to tell me what to do again. I'm totally in control. I can terrorize people at will. I can breathe fire, thank you very much." Then suddenly it dawns on him that that separates him from everybody. In the book he says he cries big, boiling dragon tears, and then Aslan shows up. After something's happened, Aslan shows up and he comes back. He comes back to the group again. They've been searching for him desperately even though he's a brat. They've been searching for him desperately to bring him back. The shepherd goes after the sheep that gets lost is the metaphor that Lewis is using here. He comes back and he says, "I want to tell you this story, not of how I became a dragon, but of how I became a boy again."

He says this. He says Aslan came to him and took him to a place where he could be bathed and washed clean, and Aslan said, "Before you jump in this water," now remember he has this bracelet on and his dragon arm has grown and the bracelet's way too small and so his arm is killing him. It's infected and constricted and he knows that if he can get in that water, it's going to make his arm feel better and that's all he cares about is just making his arm feel better. Aslan has something way better for him than just making his arm feel better as a dragon. He says, "You got to get in this water." He says, "But you have to undress first." He's like, "I'm dressed, I'm a dragon," and so he starts scratching and scratching and because he's a lizard, he sheds a layer of skin, and then he looks at his hands and he's still a dragon, so he scratches and scratches.

3 times he scratches and he peels off a layer of skin, and when he looks at it, he's still a dragon. That's where this quote is. Then the lion said, I don't know if it spoke, "You will have to let me undress you." "I was afraid of his claws, I can tell you, but I was pretty nearly desperate now, so I just lay flat on my back to let him do it. The very first tear was so deep I thought it had gone right into my heart." As he tells the story, Aslan takes a claw and pokes it in his skin and pulls it down and rips off his sin and tears it away and he said, "It was like a scab being removed that had hurt so much and the only thing that gets you through it is you know how good it's going to feel when it's gone."

That's the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, guys. He takes those areas of our lives where we're clinging to our sin, those things that we thought were going to be so good at first, and all they really do

is separate us from people and he's willing to come in. It's the brutality of grace, that he will come in and he will rip those things off sometimes. Sometimes the power of the Holy Spirit in your life is not a lot of fun, but the result is you go back to being who God made you to be. That was what happened to Eustace. He became a boy again, what he was made to be, not a dragon, not a big scary, isolated, fire-breathing, hoarding, thieving monster, but he became a boy again. That's what God made him to be and the lion helped him find that again. Then what happens when the Holy Spirit's in your heart? Let's just look really quickly at the last few verses.

"If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these." Being a dragon. "I warn you as I warned you before that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things, there is no law, and those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." As you look at these 2 lists, at the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit, I want you to first of all, really quickly, I want you to understand that the fruits of the Spirit are not things that you're supposed to aspire to.

In other words, you're not supposed to develop intentionally, "I'm going to develop a joy plan for this year. I will experience joy this year. Every day, I will find something to be joyful about." Good luck. Life is hard. That's not what this is. "I will be kind now." No, you're not. You're still a jerk. If you try to do it under your own strength, it's fake. It's phony, and people know it, trust me. This is not a list of holy character traits that you're supposed to develop. This is the results of the Holy Spirit living in your life. As you give over the things in that first list ...

Now hopefully none of you were involved in drunken orgies lately, but if you give over the things in that first list envy, strife, jealousy, we all have those things, then what happens is naturally through the process of the Holy Spirit working in your life, you become a person who has more love, who has more joy, who has more peace, more patience, more kindness, more gentleness and more self-control. It's the prize. It's not the work. It's the prize. What I want to challenge you to do is to ask the Holy Spirit to put to death the things in that first list and to develop in your heart the things in that second list.

Confess those things in that first list that you're still struggling with, and pray that his grace would cover those shortcomings and that the power of the Holy Spirit would work in your life to change you, not your effort, not your will, not your strength, not your power, but the power of the Holy Spirit. That brings us to our big idea here. I want you to read this with me, all right?

You ready? Go. I am free....Seriously? Seriously? What does that say? I am free.... Let me hear it. Come on. I am free... No, not good enough. I don't think you believe it. Do you believe this or not?

Let me hear it. Come on now. I am free... I can quit the spiritual rat race and trust the Holy Spirit to make me more like Christ.

You are free when God comes into your heart. When you give your life to Christ, you get the Holy Spirit and you are free from striving and jealousy and rage and anger. You may not have gotten there yet, but give those areas to the Holy Spirit. Watch him. Watch him change your heart. Watch him change your life. When you are trying to be sanctified on your own strength and you ignore the power of the Holy

Spirit, you're like a bodybuilder who ignores nutrition. You're like a marathon runner who ignores hydration. You're like a race car driver who ignores his pit crew. You're like a fine chef trying to use an Easy-Bake oven. It's not going to work. Trust in the power of the Holy Spirit. You don't have to keep striving to do it on your own. You're free. I'm free. I can quit the spiritual rat race and trust the Holy Spirit to make me more like Christ.

Let's pray. Father, we struggle and strive to measure up in every area of our lives. Lord, we worship our own competence. We react poorly when it's questioned. Father, I pray that you would help us to sacrifice this idol of competence, this idea that we can accept your grace for salvation but it's still up to us to live up to what you've done for us. Lord, that's a lie. It's impossible. It's something that Satan would love for us to believe. He even whispers it in our ear.

That's where doubt comes from, Lord, so Father, I pray that for each of us you would help us to surrender to you completely, not just for our salvation but also for our sanctification, for our growth as men of God. Lord, help us to challenge each other in this area, to live as free men, free from the yoke of slavery. Lord, go with us this week. Help us, Father, to speak into the lives of each other, to encourage each other to lock arms to remind each other that we are free. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.