Greenwood Baptist Church
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Can I Lose My Salvation?
2 Corinthians 13:5

I want to welcome everybody watching online and in our overflow rooms. Thank you for being here.

Last week I had a friend of ours from our church and our Bible study, Caleb, one of our young guys, out with me. We were cutting down a bunch of trees in my hayfield. Had a bunch down. So I was running the chainsaw for nine hours, all day long, and I realized I'm getting old. I was cramping. I'm talking about my back was cramping, my legs were cramping, my arms were cramping, my eyelids were cramping. It was like, I'm getting old.

So the next day there are some friends of ours from church here, Johnny and Jessica. I saw them and I told them, I said, "Yeah, I'm sore. I'm cramping." And then — I don't know why I said this — I said, "But also I've had this pain right here. It's like an ice pick sticking right there. I've had it for like six months." They said, "You need to go get that checked out." I said, "Okay, yeah, I will." And I've been thinking about it for six months.

And Johnny goes, "No, you need to go get it checked out." He said, "Let me tell you why." He said, "When I was twenty years old I was rodeoing with Brian Jarrett and we were on the road. And I was dealing with this pain, and I was expelling blood and stuff." He said, "When I was twenty and twenty-one and twenty-two, I just kept dealing with it. Finally my wife threatened me to go to the doctor, and I finally went, and they diagnosed me with" — I want to make sure I get this right, we've got nurses and doctors in here — ulcerative colitis.

So they gave him medicine and all that kind of stuff. He thought, well, it's going to get better. And it started getting better. And then he'd get off his medicine and it'd get worse again. It'd get better and it'd get worse again. This kept going on until 2011. In 2011 his wife and his mom threatened him, put him in a car and said, "You are going to get this taken care of." Took him to the Mayo Clinic. And they said, "Hey, your colon is so bad we've got to take it out." So they took it out. Took care of it.

A couple of years later, one of his friends had the same kind of symptoms. He thought it was ulcers, just like Johnny did. He was calling Johnny and saying, "Hey, give me some recipes. I need something for some easy food that's not hard on my stomach," and all that. And they kept saying, "No, no, you need to go to the doctor. You need to go to the doctor." They just kept on him. Finally he said, "Okay, I'll go to the doctor. I'll go to the doctor." He goes to the doctor. Realized it was too late, because he had colon cancer. And by the time he went to the doctor it had moved out of his colon into his liver and his other major organs. A year later he died. He was

thirty-four years old. Left a wife, a five-year-old and a two-year-old.

I said, “Okay. I’ll go to the doctor. I’ll get it checked out.”

Now, here’s the thing. We all need to stay up on our physical examinations and our yearly checkups. Johnny and Jessica now go to the doctor every single year and get an examination from top to bottom, because all this happened. Not only that — Jessica, three years ago, was diagnosed with cancer and had to have major surgeries and go through all the treatments and all that. So they’re on it every single year. Now, I’m going to go to the doctor. But no matter what happens, it’s temporary. We all need to have a physical examination here, but we need to have the most important examination, and that’s our spiritual examination.

Paul told us to do that. Here’s what he said in 2 Corinthians 13:5. If you all would please stand in honor of the reading of God’s Word. He says, **“Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.”**

Let’s pray. Father, we ask, God, as we take this test today of our spiritual inventory, that you would make it crystal clear to us whether we have a relationship with you or not. And God, if we don’t, I pray that you would draw those folks to you, and that you would save them and change their lives today. Thank you for what you’re going to do. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen. You may be seated.

Now, there might be some of you who have struggled with signs of spiritual things, going, “Man, something’s going on in my life and it’s not quite right.” Well, we can get that taken care of today. We can look at it. And the most important thing you need to know today, the spiritual examination, is this: where are you going to spend eternity? Where are you going to spend it forever? We need to know that more than any other question in here, because everything else is temporary. And knowing the answer to that question will give you peace.

I can’t tell you how many conversations I’ve had in the last few weeks — people asking me, “Well, Ronnie, I need to know: can I lose my salvation? I thought I was saved, but I don’t know if I’m saved. Can I lose it?” So we’re going to talk about that today and answer that.

You say, “Well, can we know for sure that we’re going to go to heaven? Does the Bible say that we can know for sure?” Yes, it does. The Bible says in 1 John 5:13, **“I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.”** John wrote the whole book of 1 John to Christians so that they could know for sure that they’re going to go to heaven. So you don’t have to guess, hope, wish or think. You can know one hundred percent sure you’re going to go to heaven, according to what the Bible says.

And listen, John was not writing to Christians so he could say, “All right, I’m letting you know these things so you can have a bunch of ammo and go judge other people down your street.”

That's not what that's for. He's writing it so you can know personally where you're going to spend eternity. Because I'm going to tell you right now, I'm not a judge. I don't know who in here is saved. You come up and ask me, "Hey, Ronnie, am I saved?" I don't know. Only you and God know that. The Bible says in 1 Kings 8:39, **"You alone know each human heart."** That's why Paul says, "Examine yourselves and see if you be in the faith." Not me examine you. You examine yourselves, and you see.

So in order to know whether you're saved or not, we've got to know how we're saved to begin with. A lot of people say a lot of different things. Let's just see what the Bible says about how we're saved.

Jesus said, first of all, in John 14:6, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."** Jesus said he is the only way to heaven. There is no other way. It's not by going to church. It's not by being good. It's not by doing good deeds. The only way that you and I can get to heaven is through Jesus. You say, "Well, then how do I get to heaven?" Through Jesus. The Bible is very clear about that.

First of all, I want you to know this: God loves you and cares about you. But the problem is, the Bible says in Romans 3:23, **"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."** You know what that means? That means everybody in here — we've all messed up. We've all sinned. We've all blown it. Nobody in here is better than anybody else. Everybody's sinned. And because we've sinned, we are separated from God. As a matter of fact, the Bible says we're enemies of God, because we've sinned against him.

So here's what God did, because he loved us so much. The Bible says in Romans 6:23, **"For the wages of sin is death"** — that means because we've sinned, we deserve to die and spend eternity in hell — but it goes on and says, **"but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."**

The only way we can get to heaven is through Christ. And here's what he did. Because he loved us so much, and we were separated from God because of our sin, he sent his Son, Jesus, out of heaven down to this earth to die on a cross to pay for our sins. Because you and I couldn't pay God for what we've done against him. But his Son, Jesus, did, when he lived a perfect, sinless life and died on the cross to take on all of our sin. Not only did he die on the cross — he was buried, and three days later he rose from the grave. And because he conquered death and the grave, we can conquer death and the grave and sin.

So that's how we're saved. You say, "Well then, okay, if he did that for us, then everybody in the whole world gets to go to heaven." No. Because here's what the Bible says. And our pastor does this every single week at the end of his sermon. It's real simple. It's the ABCs.

First of all, the Bible says you have to do this: A — admit that you're a sinner and ask for forgiveness. The Bible says in Acts 2:38, **"Peter replied, 'Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"** If you cannot admit that you've sinned against a holy, righteous God, you can't be saved. You can't go to heaven. You have to admit that you've sinned against him — and not only admit it, repent of it, turn from it. That's what the Bible says.

The second thing we do is we believe in Jesus and commit our life to him. The Bible says in John 3:16, **"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."**

You say, "Well then, okay, I'm good so far. I believe there's a God." You know what the Bible says about that? So what. The Bible says in James 2:19, **"You believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror."** Listen, if Satan was in here today, if he walked down the aisle, I guarantee you, if you asked him, "Hey, do you want to join our church?" — "Yeah, I'll join the church." "Well, do you believe in God?" "Yeah, I believe in God." "Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross?" "Yes, I do." "Do you believe Jesus was born of a virgin?" "Yes, I do." "And you believe he rose from the dead and all that?" "Yes, I do." A lot of people would say, "Oh, well then, good. Sign him up." No.

The word *believe* there means to put your total faith and trust in him. Because it's not just saying, "I believe there's a God." Satan knows there's a God. He believes it. It's submitting your will to him, saying, "I put my total trust and faith in you." And Satan will not do that. So the way we give our life to him: we admit that we've sinned against God, we turn from our sin, and we say, "I'm putting my total faith and trust in you."

And the third thing we do is we confess Jesus is Lord. The Bible says in Romans 10:9, **"If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved."**

You say, "How do I openly declare Jesus?" Here's what you do. Say, "God, I know I've sinned. I know I've messed up. God, I want to ask you to forgive me of my sins. And God, I turn from my sins, and I invite you into my life to be my boss, my Lord, my best friend. Thank you for dying on the cross for me, and thank you for saving me, Lord Jesus."

And if you've never done that before — you say, "Man, I've joined a church. I was baptized. I didn't know that I had to admit I've sinned against God. I didn't know I had to repent and turn from my sins and confess him as my Lord and Savior." If you've never done that, if you're sitting there going, "No, I haven't done that," I'm going to give you a chance to do it in just a minute. Right where you're seated, or whether you're watching, or whether you're in one of our overflow

rooms, I'm going to give you a chance to invite Christ to come into your life and let him save you and change your life forever.

But there are some of you sitting there going, "No, Ronnie, I've done that. But man, something's going on spiritually." Kind of like with me and my health — I've got this pain. Some of y'all are going, "Something spiritual is going on with me. I just feel distant from God. I'm dealing with sin in my life. There's something going on. So, Ronnie, can I mess up so bad that I lose my salvation? Because I've done that before. Can I lose it?"

I think probably the greatest example of this in the Bible is that of Peter. Peter was one of the disciples, one of the Twelve. You talk about committed — Peter was committed. You want me to tell you what he did? When Jesus called him, Peter left his family, his job, everything, for three years of ministry with Jesus. Left it all to follow Jesus. You want me to tell you how committed he was? One time Jesus was walking on water. Jesus told him he could come walk on water. Peter jumped out of a boat and walked. I guarantee we've got a bunch of people here who wouldn't even jump out of a canoe. And he jumped out of a boat to walk, because Jesus said he could do it — and walked on water. Let me tell you how committed he was: when they were coming to get Jesus and take him to the cross, Peter whipped out his sword, cut a dude's ear off and said, "No, you're not taking my Jesus." That's how committed this dude was. You think you're committed? Peter was committed.

All right. So then what happened after that? After they got Jesus, they took him off, and Peter did what? He started following Jesus from a distance. Maybe that's how you got to where you're at right now, because you're following Jesus from a distance. That's a whole 'nother sermon. But let that sink in just a second. Following him from a distance.

So then they got to the courtyard where they're going to interview Jesus and question him and all that kind of stuff. When they get there, Peter kind of slides in there by the campfire. He gets by the campfire and sits down. Somebody goes, "Hey, aren't you one of Jesus' disciples?" He goes, "No, I'm not. You're crazy. What are you thinking?"

Not too long after that, another girl comes and goes, "Oh no, I know you're one of his. Yes, you are." Because she's kin to the dude that got his ear cut off. She goes, "No, I know you're one of his." He goes, "Woman" — almost cussing — "I don't know what you're talking about. I'm not one of his."

And then finally some dude goes, "No, dude, you've got that Galilean accent." It's kind of like whether you're in the South and you're up North. Somebody goes, "Oh no, dude, you're from the South." That's what's going on. He said, "Dude, you're a Galilean. Don't be telling me you're not one of his."

And then here's what he said, in verse 60: **"Peter said, 'Man, I don't know what you are talking about.'"** But he said it in a Galilean accent, which I don't know how that went. **"And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter."**

Now, when he did that, I don't think it was a look like, "There you go again, Peter, just messing up." It wasn't one of those looks. It wasn't one of those looks like, "What did you just do?" Jesus already knew he was going to do that. As a matter of fact, Jesus told him the night before he was crucified, "Hey, Satan has asked to sift you, but I've been praying for you, that your faith won't fail. And hey, Peter, after you've repented, go strengthen your brothers." Jesus knew he was going to fail him. Jesus looked at him just like when he called him — like he was looking right through his soul. And Jesus looked at Peter. And man, when Peter saw that, he just broke. And the Bible says, **"Suddenly, the Lord's words flashed through Peter's mind: 'Before the rooster crows tomorrow, you will deny three times that you even know me.' And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly."**

Peter was broken. He was like, "Man, I cannot believe I just did that. I just denied Jesus to his face. He saw it. He saw me deny him. He heard it all." And Peter's thinking, "I am the biggest failure there is. There is nobody that can blow it like I just did." He thought it was done. He thought there's no way he's coming back from that.

But you know what Jesus did? Jesus not only forgave him — Jesus restored him. In Luke 24:34: after Jesus died on the cross, was buried in the tomb and risen from the dead, one of the first people he appeared to was Peter. We don't know what that conversation was, but we know he appeared to Peter by himself. And whatever he did in that conversation, Jesus restored him and forgave him.

And we see it right after that. Peter is thinking, "Hey, there's no way I'm coming back from this." So what did he do? He went back to fishing. He's out there in the boat fishing. Jesus said, "Throw your net on the other side." He throws his net on the other side, catches over a hundred and fifty fish, and he realizes it's Jesus. He takes off and starts swimming back to the shore, gets up there. And while they're at the shore around a campfire, Jesus looked at him and asked him three times, "Peter, do you love me?" Three times Peter says, "Yes, Lord, you know I do." Three times Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep."

Do you know what Jesus did? Jesus took Peter's three denials and turned them into three opportunities for Peter to say, "I'm devoted to you." Jesus said, basically, "Hey, if that's true, then let's get about it. Get back to what I've made you to do. Start fishing for men again." He forgave him, and he restored him.

And that is hope for us. I don't care how bad you think it's been, what you've done — he will forgive you and he will restore you, just like he did for Peter. And he said, "Go and strengthen

your brothers" after this. Remember that? Peter became one of the pillars of the early church. And not only that, he wrote 1 and 2 Peter, and he is still strengthening brothers and sisters all over the world to this day. If God can use somebody like Peter, and he can forgive somebody like Peter, he can do the same thing for you and for me. There's hope.

Do you want to know what Jesus has to say to your question — can you lose your salvation? You know what Jesus says about it? I don't care what any theologian says. I want to tell you what Jesus said. Jesus said in John 10:27-29, **"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand."**

You want me to tell you what that means? Listen: your salvation is not based on your power. It's based on God's promise — what he said. So I don't care. Satan can come at you, and he can tempt you, he can aggravate you and do all that stuff. But he cannot change — if you've given your life to Christ, he cannot change the fact that you are God's son and God's daughter. It's in the books. It's done. That's the way he views you. And that's how much he cares about you.

You say, "Ronnie, I've got a bone to pick with you, though. You say we can't lose our salvation?" No, you can't. "Okay, well then what about — Ronnie, I know some Christians. They call themselves Christians. They said they repented of their sins and all that stuff. But Ronnie, I see them out there. They're out there living *vida loca,* going crazy, partying it up every single weekend. They care nothing about it. They just flat-out live for Satan. Ronnie, I know a pastor who preached forever, years and years, and then at the end he decided he didn't believe in Jesus anymore, and now he says he's an atheist. What about those people, Ronnie?"

Well, first of all, I think the problem with these objections is the assumption that everybody who says they're a Christian is actually born again. The issue is not, did they lose their salvation? The issue is, did they ever have it to begin with? That's the issue. And once again, I'm not a judge. I don't know who is and who's not. God does, though. You know what the Bible says in Proverbs 16:2? **"People may be pure in their own eyes, but the Lord examines their motives."**

So does the Bible say whether we can know whether our faith is real, that it's the real deal and it's genuine? Yep, sure does. There are tons of scriptures. We don't have time to go through them all, so I'm just going to hit on a key few of them.

The first one is this: if our faith is real, there's going to be fruit. Jesus said in Matthew 7:20, **"Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions."** Basically, Jesus is saying, hey, a good tree is going to produce good fruit, a bad tree is going to produce bad fruit. You can tell by the fruit they have whether they're saved or not.

You say, “Well, what’s fruit? I don’t even know how I’m supposed to know if I’m bearing fruit.” Galatians 5 says, **“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!”** God says, in other words, when he comes into your life and he changes your life, you’re going to produce fruit. Now, I just want you to know: you’re not going to arrive and get a hundred percent capacity right off the top, day one. It is a growing process. It is a transforming, daily process of him transforming us over and over, day after day. That’s what’s going to happen. He’ll transform you.

My question is, are you producing fruit? What kind of fruit do you have? I don’t know. I’m not with you. The people around you know.

The second thing: if your faith is real, the Bible says you’ll obey him. 1 John 3:9 says, **“Those who have been born into God’s family do not make a practice of sinning, because God’s life is in them. So they can’t keep on sinning, because they are children of God.”**

You think, “There’s no hope there. I sin every day. I sinned today, before we even got out of the car. I’m a living, walking sin.” John is not talking about being perfect, being sinless. We’re not ever going to arrive and be sinless until we see him in glory. The Bible says in 1 John 1:8, **“If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves.”** We won’t be absent of sin until we see God in his glory. So that’s going to happen. He’s not talking about perfection here, sinlessness. We’re going to sin. We’re going to mess up. He’s talking about a habitual lifestyle of sin. That word in 1 John 3:9 literally means to habitually practice. It’s in the present indicative, which means right now, continuously acting out a lifestyle of habitual practice of sin. So there’s a difference. A Christian is going to mess up. They’re going to sin. They’re going to stumble. But there’s a difference between a habitual lifestyle of sin — a trajectory, your lifestyle, a trajectory of sin — and just messing up. And that’s what he’s talking about.

The Bible says in 1 John 3:10, **“So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.”** He said, basically, point blank: hey, you can tell who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are. It’s real simple. You can look at their life and see whether they obey. Jesus said in John 14, if you love me, you’re going to obey me. It’s that simple. It’s not difficult.

So there are a lot of indicators. But let me tell you the biggest indicator, the ultimate test of whether your faith is real and whether it’s genuine. Here it is: it’s where you end up.

We’re going to look at Judas. We just looked at Peter. He’s one of the Twelve. So is Judas. Judas was the one who would later betray Jesus. Now think about this. Jesus called Judas to be his disciple. Judas was with them from day one. He mingled with them. He ate with them. He fellowshipped with them. He ministered with them. When they’re feeding five thousand, he’s out

there, he's helping them distribute the food. He's always doing the stuff. He's helping them with the poor and the homeless and all that stuff. He's always doing this. He was good at show, but his heart had not been transformed.

Something was going down, and there were indicators of this before this all went down. Here's what happened. Do you remember when they were in the upper room, the disciples in the upper room, the night before Jesus was going to get killed on the cross? They're up in the upper room, they're having the Lord's Supper. And Jesus looked at them and he said, "Hey, boys, one of y'all is going to betray me." Do you know what the disciples did? All the disciples go, "What? Is it me? Is it me?" John, the one whom Jesus loved: "Is it me, Lord?" Peter: "Is it me?" They're all going, "Is it me? Is it me?"

I mean, when I first think about this, I'm thinking, surely that's not the way it went down. I would think it'd go down like this: Jesus would look around, he'd take the bread and go, "Hey, boys, one of y'all is going to betray me." I would have thought that every single disciple would have stopped right in their tracks. They'd have stopped talking. They'd just shut up, and they'd all turn their heads and look over at Judas. I mean, if he's the one that's going to betray him, wouldn't you think they all knew? And they'd just be like, "Yep. Mm-hmm. You could see Satan in his eyes. Look at him. Is that a horn? I think there's horns."

That's what I would have thought. But he was so good at putting on a show, they didn't even know. Even when Jesus said, "Hey, go do what you've got to do," and he got up and left, they thought he was just going to go get some food or something for the rest of them. They didn't know. He was good at putting on a show, but his heart had not been changed. His heart had not been transformed. Jesus even said in John 6, a couple of years before this all went down, "Hey, haven't I called all twelve of y'all? But one of y'all is the devil." He knew what was going down.

And so here's what went down. 1 John 2:19: how do we know if it's real? It says, **"These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us."** Let me just tell you this: if someone can completely abandon Jesus, turn their back on him and run into sin and live it and love it and not be convicted about their sin, the question is not, did they lose their salvation? The issue is, they never had it to begin with. They were never born again to begin with, according to what the Bible says. Because we're changed.

So you say, "Well, how do we know if we're changed? How does that happen?" 2 Peter 2:21-22 says, **"It would be better if they had never known the way to righteousness than to know it and then reject the command they were given to live a holy life. They prove the truth of this proverb: 'A dog returns to its vomit.' And another says, 'A washed pig returns to the mud.'"**

Now, I'm not going to talk about the dog and the vomit. Because some of y'all are going to go out this door and y'all are going to go over there to the donut area and get you some donuts, and I don't want y'all getting sick all over people out there. So I'm not going to talk about a dog returning to his vomit and y'all letting him lick all over your face and stuff like that, because that's just disgusting.

But I will talk about a pig. Because I love me some pig, especially beside some eggs and hash browns. I'm telling you, bacon, sausage, I love it all. But no, for real, I really do love pigs. And I'm going to tell you why I love pigs.

When I was a freshman in high school I was in FFA. My dad had just gotten his first church — he had just gotten out of seminary — so we were in Rubottom, Oklahoma. Anybody know where Rubottom, Oklahoma, is? Anybody? There's some of you gamblers not wanting to admit it. Rubottom, Oklahoma. So you cross the Red River, Marietta, Oklahoma, twenty miles, hang a left, go twenty miles, you go through Rubottom on the way to Ringling, right, going that way.

So my dad became pastor at that church. You know how many were there the first Sunday my dad preached? Thirteen. Thirteen people. We were in a little bitty church. Lived in the church parsonage. We were dirt poor. Had no money. My mom, dad and three boys.

So I go to school, I'm in FFA, and they want us to show. I'm like, "Yeah, I want to show." But I couldn't show cattle. We didn't have any money. Couldn't buy a calf, a steer or a heifer, much less all the food for them. And we didn't have a place — church parsonage, nobody's going to let us put a heifer or a steer right there. So I'm like, "I don't know what I'm going to do."

Well, there was an older lady from our church who lived right across the highway. We lived right on the highway, and she lived right across the highway, and she had a little quarter-acre place. Johnson grass was high. She had a little messed-up shed that had been there for fifty years. She told me if I mowed that place and fixed that shed, I could put my pig back there and make a pen back there for my pig. Because that's the only thing we could afford was a pig.

And so our worship pastor at our church, he raised pigs. He sold me one for a hundred and twenty-five dollars. So I named her Miss Piggy — my first pig. And man, I'm going to tell you, I loved Miss Piggy. I was out there every day, two times a day, out there walking around, training her every day, getting her ready to show. Y'all know what I'm talking about? Doing all this. I'm working with her two times a day, every day.

And so it gets close to the show, and my ag teacher, Mr. Morgan, says, "Hey, Ronnie, I want to make sure your pig doesn't go overweight. We need to come out after class one day and come out there and weigh her." I said, "Well, come on." So we went out there — and it's on the highway. He goes, "Well, hey, how can we get back there to your pig?" Because the pen was back there, and he didn't want to drive through the lady's yard and stuff. I said, "Let's just drop the scales

right here. I'll go get her. I'll bring her to them." He goes, "Ronnie, we're on the highway. Your pig's going to get run over." I said, "No, she won't, Mr. Morgan. I've got her. Let's drop the scales right here." He goes, "Okay."

So I go get Piggy. I bring Miss Piggy up there. I get her right up to the scales. She gets right up to the scales, she just sniffs the scales, I just pop her on the butt, she walks right up on the scales. We weigh her. Pop her right out. She goes out. I take her right back to her pen. He goes, "I cannot believe that. I've never seen that before in my whole life." So then every year after that, all the ag teachers would tell the story about me weighing a pig on the side of the highway. To every freshman class coming in.

And so we were getting close to the show. I get her there. Man, I wash her down with Dawn soap. I've got that soap all over her. I'm washing her up. She's shining, looking good. She was a Hamp, so, you know, black with a white belt. I got her toes all shiny, putting that show sheen on her. She's smelling good. She's loving it. Every time I'm taking her to the wash rack, she's just loving it.

Well, after the show we take her back to the house, get her to the side of the highway, open up the back of the trailer, walk her right back to the pen, open up the gate, put her in the pen. You know the first thing she did? Let me tell you what she did. No, no, she didn't roll. The first thing she did was she went straight to her water trough and dumped it — just picked it up and dumped it. And then she started making a mud hole and just rolling all in it and around it and stuff.

I'm thinking, "What are you doing?" Let me tell you, this pig was good. She was trained. As a matter of fact, I'm going to tell you, you could take her to your house if you wanted to. She could walk in your house and she'd act better than your dogs. That's how trained she was. She was good. And so I'm thinking, "What? I thought I had sophisticated you. We have gone to another level." And here she is going right over there, throwing it over. "I just washed you, gave you a bath. You were loving it. Don't you remember how you liked it and all this stuff?" No. Pop. Roll in mud. All that stuff.

Let me just tell you: at the end of the day, a pig is still a pig.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, **"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new."** No change, no Jesus.

My question for you this morning: are you a prodigal? Prodigals come home. Pigs, they stay in the mud.

The Bible says this in Hebrews 3:14 — how do we know if our faith is real, if it's genuine? **"For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ."**

I want to be clear about something. This is not talking about us working our way to heaven. You can't earn it. You can't be good enough to get to heaven or anything like that. That's not what this is talking about. Because the Bible says in Ephesians 2:8-9 that it's by grace that we're saved, through faith. It's not of ourselves. It's a gift of God, not by works, so no one can boast. No — we are saved. When we are saved and give our life to Christ, he changes us. As a result of that change and our love for him, we want to serve him, love him and obey him as a result of what he's done for us.

Now, if that's never happened to you, and you're taking your spiritual examination right now, as Paul says — examine yourself, see if you be in the faith — and you go, "No, dude, I've never done that before. I've joined a church, I was baptized, my parents made a decision for me, they told me to pray this prayer and I did it just because they wanted me to. But dude, I've never done that. I've never personally chosen to follow Jesus. I've never admitted I've sinned and repented and turned from my sin and confessed him as my Lord and Savior." If that's never happened, you can do it right now.

You say, "How?" I'm going to pray that prayer. Remember, it's not a magical prayer. It's not a formula. You're just saying, "Hey, I'm going to follow Jesus for the rest of my life." If you've never done that and you want to, I'm going to give you a chance to do it right now.

And if you'll do me a favor — ushers, help me out — just give me two minutes. Nobody move, nobody talk. Can we bow our heads and close our eyes, please? With heads bowed and eyes closed: you say, "Ronnie, I've never done that before, but I want to." Then you pray that prayer with me right now. Invite Christ to come into your heart. Pray this prayer:

"Dear God, I know I'm a sinner, and I want to ask you to forgive me of my sins. And I turn from my sins. And I invite you into my life to be my boss, my Lord and my best friend. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. Thank you for saving me, Lord Jesus."

Now, with heads bowed and eyes closed, no one's looking around. I'm not going to come to you to embarrass you or anything like that. I just want to pray for you. If you say, "Ronnie, that's me, I prayed that prayer and I invited Jesus to come into my life" — if you just prayed that prayer with me, with heads bowed and eyes closed, would just those of you that prayed that prayer look up at me right now? Let me catch your eyes.

I'm going to start on this right side of the room over here. All right, yes sir, right here. Anybody else in this section over here? Say, "Ronnie, I prayed that prayer." Just look up. Let me catch your eyes real quick. Anybody else through here? Say, "Ronnie, that's me." Yes sir, in the back. Up through here. Over here in this section right here. Anybody through here? Yes ma'am. Yes sir. Yes sir. Right through here. This section over here. Say, "Ronnie, that's me. I just prayed that prayer." Just look up at me. Okay.

Would those that prayed that prayer just keep looking up, just real quick? I just want you to know this: according to what the Bible says, he forgave you of everything you've ever done. He's come to live in you, and he will never leave you. And that is good news.

You say, "Okay, what am I supposed to do now?" You're supposed to let people know. You're supposed to confess him as your Lord and Savior. And we want to pray with you. We want to encourage you. You say, "How do I do that?" You can scan the QR code right here, or text and just let us know, "Hey, I prayed that prayer." If you're watching online, you can just shoot us a text. There's a button, I think, on there online that you can do that as well. Just let us know, "Hey, I prayed that prayer and I invited Christ to come into my life." We want to get you some material too. If you don't have a Bible, we want to get you a Bible. We want to help you start growing spiritually and stuff. We're not going to be hounding you or nothing like that. You just let us know you did it, and we want to pray for you and encourage you. We're excited about your walk with Christ and your starting to walk with him and grow with him.

You can put your heads back down now. There's one more group of people I want to talk to. And that's those of you who say, "Ronnie, I realize I've done this before, but man, I've gotten away from him. I got in a pig pen and I need to get out. I'm tired of running from him. I don't want my life, the trajectory, to be a life of sin. I want to live for him."

The Bible says clearly that you can know you're saved. You say, "Yeah, Ronnie, I know, but man, I need to be like Peter. I need to come back." If that's you, with heads bowed and eyes closed, and you want to return to the Lord and you'd like for me to pray for you about that — if that's you, would you look up at me right now? Let me catch your eyes.

This side of the room over here to the right. Yes sir. Anybody else through here? Yes sir. Yes ma'am. Yes sir. Anybody else through here? Yes ma'am. Yes ma'am. Yes sir. Yes sir. Yes ma'am. Yes sir. Yes ma'am. Yes sir. Anybody else through here? Yes ma'am. Got you, buddy. All right.

Those of you that looked up, would you just keep looking up real quick? Everybody else, heads bowed and eyes closed. I've got good news for you. 1 John 1:9 says, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** And just like he forgave Peter, he'll forgive you. Peter repented. Jesus said, "Hey, once you repent and you come back" — Peter did it. God restored him, used him. So it's not too late. You can take care of that. So while I'm praying, you just confess to God. Ask him to forgive you, to restore you, just like he did Peter. And he'll do it, because he's faithful. He doesn't lie. He's a good God.

Let me pray for you right now. Father, thank you for those that are here today that you've saved and changed their lives. I pray, God, that you'd use them for your kingdom and glory. I also lift up, Father, those that are believers but have gotten in the pig pen, away from you. I pray, Father, that you would just restore them, and that, God, they'll sense your presence like never before, and

you'd reveal yourself to them. Thank you, Father, for your Word. You say you forgive us if we confess and we repent. So thank you, Father, for that. I thank you for doing that in their lives right now. And Lord, that they'll move on and that they will finish strong and well at the end. Bless them, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Hey, real quick, we want to celebrate. We had five people give their lives to Christ this morning, this service. Amen?

I want to say this. If you are one of those people that prayed to receive Christ, or that God's dealing with you and you said, "I want some more prayer," we have some men that are going to be out in the foyer out here in the back and on this side. They've got these green shirts — bright green, has a letter G on it. You go up to one of them. Any one of them are waiting. I think we've got women too. Any one of them that have one of those green shirts on will be looking for you, waiting for you. You can go talk to them, and they'd be glad to pray for you about your decision and things you've got to go through. Thank you.