

Growing Cold

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[0 : 0 0] Which was a bit of a shame really, we maybe should have because even the whole of the chapter and in it and into chapter 25 might have even been helpful but We're looking at one particular section and not dealing with the whole passage if you're not familiar with that I hope you'll not kind of get lost a little bit in some of the wider Thoughts that I'm drawing into this Passage, I hope I'll try and explain things clearly with respect to it but when this is a passage near Jesus crucifixion and His mind's really focused and he's speaking to his disciples and he's telling them things that he wants them to hear and It's very much, you know in response to a question a question about Jerusalem about the temple and Jesus launches into this great prophetic statement about the end times, okay and It's very significant therefore as a prophetic statement

He is with confidence and with boldness and without really batting an eyelid Jesus is saying what's gonna happen in the future. I wonder if we've even thought of that. We still think about that for a moment We would never think We just don't do that do we?

We don't make declarative statements about what's gonna happen in the future. Jesus didn't bat an eyelid Because he was God and he had this knowledge of the future And in a passage like this where Jesus so clearly and strongly speaks It does make us think and I hope you think today And I hope that you're active and engaged in the worship mentally and spiritually as we think about God's word About how important Jesus is and how authoritative is Jesus word and Jesus Message in our lives, you know, I think so often We've lost sight of Jesus as prophet Jesus speaking not only into our lives, but speaking about the future of our lives This is him speaking About the future. I wonder do we regard the words of Jesus very often as irrelevant to us?

I hope not because this is an interesting passage and it's a really interesting Glance into the future and we are kind of just about roughly in the middle Because he speaks about something that's already happened and he speaks about something that's still to happen So it's very relevant isn't it at that level because we're right in the middle of it What Jesus is saying Think so often Jesus Christ is in the dock of our lives We're pointing the finger at him with accusing and asking him about things and we're diminishing his value and his importance and significance But with faith in our lives, we look with a different perspective, don't we?

Everyone around us has God and Jesus in the dock, but with faith We put him in a different place. We can bow the knee and we can worship him and we can listen to him and we can understand His lordship over our lives Jesus in this passage and I'm not going to go into it in any kind of detail in terms of the Focus of a lot of the chapter Many people have spoken about this chapter. There's a lot of different questions and a lot of different answers about the passage But he clearly because it's a difficult passage, but he clearly is speaking He's merging the future together in one big sort of picture, but he's speaking about two defined events It's a double apocalypse That's been spoken of here He's speaking about two Cataclysmic events in the world. Okay one has happened and one that is still to happen in verse three or verse

[4:15] Two he says I tell you the truth not one stone here will be left and another everyone will be thrown down and then he goes on in verse 15 We didn't read it If you have time go home and read it 15 to 25 He speaks about the abomination that causes desolation and people who are women are pregnant It's going to be terrible in these days You know you've got to flee to the hills and so on and he says all this will happen within your lifetime and Then he goes on to say Further on in the passage no one knows about the day or the hour when the son of man will return so he's speaking about two different things Okay But it's very significant. I want you to stay with me on this don't don't switch off because it's really significant He's first of all speaking about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 Okay, that's the bits that we can take from this passage and we can see they apply very much to his own day and generation And he warns them to flee about something terrible that's going to happen and in AD 70 The temple was the second temple was destroyed not one stone was left on another and it was a desperate

It was a apocalyptic event It was terrible because all of the people all the people that Jesus was speaking to all the Jewish people they saw Jerusalem and Israel as the world That was their world. That was what they lived for they thought they would be safe in Jerusalem and in fact many of them as you know thought that Jesus would come as an earthly king and kick out the Roman emperor and Reign forever in Jerusalem and they would be part of that so their whole world was around Jerusalem Indeed around the time of AD 70 a lot of Jewish people ran towards the city for Security and safety because they thought behind the walls of God's own city where God dwell in his temple we would be safe and You want to read some stories about AD 70 and the destruction of the temple when the Jews tried to Defend themselves and try to Repel the Roman army under Titus and we are told of the most terrible destruction of probably over a million Jews at that time in

Jerusalem and Josephus their Jewish historian says this slaughter within These walls was even more dreadful than the spectacle without man and women old and young and Surgeons and priests those who fought and those who in treated mercy were hewn down and indiscriminate carnage The number of slaves Number slain exceeded that of slayers Legionnaires had to clamber over heaps of dead to carry out their work of extermination It wasn't a good event It was a cataclysmic end of the world event And Jesus was saying to the people of his day Don't put your trust in the bricks and mortar of Jerusalem and of the temple. That's not your world That's not what is important. I'm important I'm significant and the end of the world will come and it was a warning really to them to flee from What happens and and there is certainly some evidence that

Christians between Jesus time and 80 70 he did that and many of them did leave Jerusalem and survived Because of what Jesus had said but then he goes on to broaden it lift up his vision and broaden it to all of us and Speaks about the return of Jesus Christ that he has come once in redemption and they comes a second time to bring the end of the world to bear as We know it here and now returning in glory and the same truth is expressed by Jesus for us don't put all your hope and trust in this life and In all the things that you can hold on to here and now he says because it's not all that there is and it's not all That there's going to be says whether it's Jerusalem and the bricks in the temple you trust in or whether it's this life and and Your career and your future and this day and age

He says I want you to look beyond that and see that there is Spiritual truth and a perspective that should be different to that That's a very long and laborious and heavy introduction that probably has lost nearly everyone here But it's I was I think it was important to put it in that kind of context. So what does Jesus see in?

[8 : 59] terms of how the Christian church develops until he returns well, it's really quite interesting and I just want to see a couple of things and What I want to talk about is something that is always kind of rather chilled my spine and soul a little bit But having studied it. I'm much more encouraged. I think in many ways in verse 12 of of chapter 24 Jesus speaking about the Christian church really and He says because of the increase of wickedness the love of most will grow cold But he who stands firm to the end will be saved So there's a picture there of or I'll shall I say a warning there But just as the whole passage is a warning about what does happen and what is Is often the case. It's a warning for us to Not fall into that particular Condition ourselves the spiritual the sign of danger then for us at any time of the Christian life whether it's

You know close to Jesus first coming or close to his second coming doesn't make much difference is love cooling down is Your spiritual love cooling down. That's what Jesus focuses on isn't it your love cooling down for him in These days the love of most will grow cold the love for Christ the love for God Will grow cold love cooling down?

Now that's a challenge to us today about our own Christian lives. Where are we with God? It's a challenge about his significance and what emphasis he has for life But can I say one or two things about what Jesus is saying here around that? He's reminding us in the first place that Between his first coming in his second coming the territory is going to be inhospitable, okay?

It's going to be inhospitable. I'm going to speak about this more next week, but we're not in heaven yet Okay, and we mustn't think we're in heaven yet. The territory is inhospitable versus four to eleven speaks about the kind of life The kind of world we're in it's a world where there's a nation rising up against nation There's earthquakes and there's wars and there's rumors of wars and all these things are happening and always have happened And he's saying the territory to in which we live as Christians is an inhospitable one This is what it will be like until he returns It's ever been thus and We recognize that and he's saying that it's it's inhospitable and difficult territory in which to live as a Christian There's battles. There's persecution. There's opposition. There's temptation. There's our own hearts That we're struggling with all the time a sense of disharmony in our world in our relationships even in nature

That's The territory that we live in and it may even be and many of course believe this much more kind of Maybe fundamentally than I do that these pains will intensify clearly That they'll get worse and verse 80 speaks about these only birth pains For pains do is generally intensifying it may be that these Realities will become more intensified the closer Jesus comes to returning There may well be more trouble more difficulty more opposition it may be the case But doesn't really matter Whether or how we think about these things Ultimately because the warning is a relational warning He says the love of most will grow cold. You see Jesus warning to us his encouragement to us to think is about ourselves in

[13 : 09] Relational terms with him a love of most will grow cold Christ hears defining for us What he sees is the core of faith The core of faith he sees is a relationship of love That's very significant and very important Because he's reminding us that it's our relationship with them a relationship of grace Which is from him and which is miraculous is what we are to focus on in our lives And it's impossible to manufacture you can come to church you can look the part you can dress the part You can sing the part you can read the part you can pray the part, but you can't manufacture a love for God because naturally We don't have that It's not about religion So often we patronize God by giving him the faggants of our lives by giving him the odd moment now and again to appease our conscience And we add a little piece of church now and again we nod our head towards him

We philosophize about him, but he says what I crave most is that passionate heart for me That love relationship which has not grown cold that gift of grace Which includes does it not worship submission sacrifice yes and even suffering These things he says he's defining the core of faith and warning that for many that core will crumble Will at least grow cold the love of many will grow cold. It's the opposite of the boiling frog, isn't it?

You know, that's urban myth. Is it an urban myth? Is it true? I don't know the scientists here might know it. If you put a frog into boiling water, it'll jump out. So where are the danger? It'll just jump out. But if you put a frog in cold water and just slowly heat up the water to boiling point, it'll boil alive because it'll just kind of be kind of in a soporific state. It won't realize its danger. I've heard various scientists saying it might be true might not be true. I like the story. I think it's good. Well, not not for the frog. I don't mean for the frog, but I recognize that it's got a good image there's a good picture within and it's kind of the opposite of that, isn't it?

Here that Jesus is speaking about the love of many will grow cold. It's not a dramatic thing. Our fall from grace very seldom is. Is it's not there in the front pages of the newspapers not an overnight sensation for us is very often a growing cold from God moving slowly gradually away from him becoming satisfied without him. Getting used to not being in his company and his presence. It's a gradual demise of love in our lives. That is the danger that Christ provides and recognizes here that gradual death of love. What most marriages don't end overnight. It's a gradual demise of love. Changing of habits changing of behavior changing of emphasis and priority and thinking. Listening to different voices. Turning our attention to other people or other things other loves.

Isn't that what happens? Isn't that the warning and the danger for us spiritually that we move from our place of faith and grace and move away to somewhere else where our love for God grows cold love for God and Christ grows cold. And so I just want to ask maybe at the beginning of this year as I have to ask for myself very often where is our relationship with Christ Jesus today. I've all I have to say I said at the beginning I've often shuddered at this verse because I've thought it so often reflects my own heart. It's my love growing cold. Is it growing cold if I move to a cold callous professionalism?

[17 : 35] It's a kind of intellectual faith. Philosophical faith they moved from that core place my lukewarm. Jesus warns the church doesn't even wrote revelation Don't be lukewarm. I would almost rather you cold hot colds bad place. But don't be lukewarm because it's nauseating to the living God. It's our heart. It's your heart in it for Christ today. Has he got your heart do you understand what it means to that he has your heart that you love him heart and soul. Or have he found convenient denials that let your love grow cold you treading water spiritually. The whole concept and talk of living with Christ in terms of a relationship. In terms of a delight in terms of a spiritual love is that struggle for you?

As I do and can we say that we love him or is our love growing cold do you long for the service and the challenges of a service and the uncomfortable reality sometimes of God's word do you long for that to finish you leave the church and that's your religious penance over for the week. You could just live your life without him. It's not it isn't that really it isn't really a lot. It has a signal. It isn't really about what we do in here is it isn't the. This is the. It's the heart that you take with you and I take with me when we walk out of here. That's what my this is an equipping place. There's a worshipful place. That's why it's so important that we all are coming to worship as I mentioned at the beginning in order to worship because our hearts are right with God as we'll go on to say and

See through Jesus Christ. Because there's a challenge in that isn't there. The love of most will grow cold it's a prophecy from Jesus Christ. But there's great hope as well and I would like to finish on this great hope. But those who stand firm he who stands firm to the end will be saved. That's a great message of hope for us that Jesus puts out and you know he puts it who's this for?

Well, this specifically is for you and me in The age between Christ's first and his second coming doesn't matter when it is You know because we've become really sophisticated in 21st century. It doesn't make it any less relevant. She's stand firm to the end That's what we're to do That's what we're being asked to do stand firm to the end. That's the sign of hope I'm not interested. I'm not here to induce guilt in you as if there's some kind of self-help that will trigger from Looking at your heart and saying well, I don't really love him enough God's word and Christ is about finding hope and finding a future in him and recognizing his perspective and his priorities for us and What he's encouraging us to stand firm. It's not a kind of stoic. I'm just gonna be a believer come what may I'm gonna just do my best even though I don't it's not that kind of Self-help

Stoicism it's recognizing that we stand firm in the faith Stand firm in him as it were stand firm in that relationship with him. That's what we have to do First contain 16 stand firm in the faith second contains 121 to it is to it is by faith you stand firm So it's a standing. It's not just a kind of vague thing. It's standing firm in the faith once delivered to the saints, isn't it?

[21 : 41] that's the characteristics of a Living relationship with Christ that enables us to carry on and maybe today it start 2012 you're thinking I can't carry on It's been such a hard year 2011 spiritually I can't carry on and fed up with church things are always the same and fed up with Christians and so I'm fed up with God and you can't stand firm Want to go can I encourage you then to stand firm again in the faith?

Can I ask you to be aware of the opposite of that of being on the run? Always on the run in your life living In your life a hundred miles an hour never stopping to think never stopping to take note and never stopping to meditate when I was younger I used to waste a lot of time as a student probably was about a student time some of you around my age will know about this program telly It was it was Morning TV, okay, you should never watch the TV in the morning. It was called supermarket sweep Did any some of you recognize that supermarket sweep? You shouldn't really have been watching it You should have been doing something more useful with your time But supermarket sweep was a great program where you had to answer questions and the more questions you answered the more time You got to run around the supermarket with a trolley and fill it Okay, now some people live their lives like that Always rushing about filling their lives with as much as they can put in it before it all comes to an end

Just a supermarket sweep of life always on the run Never stopping to think never stopping to consider never stopping to let God in other lives and Make them consider. There's a very controversial film out just now by a director Steve McQueen called shame. It's about sex addiction and I was reading about a comedian who was speaking about that film who he believed had his own Addictive sexual behavior and he says in his blog Seeing every single woman as a potential sexual adventure makes me miserable tires me out and leaves me feeling Vacuous and shallow and ultimately very lonely It's that quest. It's that roulette and I'm not going into The medical realities of whether there is such a thing as a sex addiction or not at this point, but the reality is that there's this relentless driven

Disatisfied form of living Always on the run never stopping Never being able to put down roots never in relationship never being ordinary at that level And that's a philosophy of life that we need to can be warned against in our own lives because everyone says you got You know, you be all you can be Have a great life Fill it with excitement do lots of things Now I'm not denying that's a significant thing and it's important to live a full life because in Christ We're told he offers us life to the full, but we must remember Christ perspective that this isn't all there is That's what Jesus saying is it you don't you're not being all you can be because you've only got this life and then it ends You're not getting old and thinking on I need to make the most of every moment because this is all I've got and then it's just Nothingness that's what Jesus is saying don't always be on the run Don't always be looking for the great new experience, but rest is to stand firm to the end

Yes, Chris as an unbeliever is how you're living your life jumping from one experience to another Looking for satisfaction looking for rest looking for fulfillment So you're living your life crises There's more to life than that. He says this life isn't all there is And I think that's probably a great Challenge maybe particularly for the younger people But as Christians are we living our lives like that always on the run Never stopping to stick to take stock never stopping to listen for what God is saying Never standing still always looking for the new spirits experience the new teaching the new conference that will show me how to live the Christian life ABC Z Something great something dramatic something Wonderful that will always give me a great feeling that's not life Life is about wars and rumors of wars It's about struggle and battle that's reality

[26 : 31] But we're to stand firm in Christ because that is understanding the nature of faith. It is standing in him Being spiritually monogamous in a relationship with Christ Going there for our spiritual nourishment for grace for forgiveness because otherwise we will run an empty You can't live the Christian life if you're not standing firm in Christ and in relationship with him What does that look like as I close just a couple of practical points?

It surely must include making time for him Doesn't it it must be Is that not the case? If we're to stand firm in Christ if it's a relationship of love you need to stop We need to prioritize him it's not an activity it's rest you to meditate on His word listen to him speak to him. It's a relationship not a speaker about something transcendental Just ordinary spiritual relationship with the living God So much pressure to be busy to be doing to be on the move I say look today and tomorrow Monday and Tuesday when they stop Give me some time Speak to me tell me your problems your issues your doubts your fears your worries your lack of faith Your tendency to grow cold speak to me talk to me about these things stop

Still make time for him. He says it's just it's just you and him. Isn't it ultimately? Don't lie on me. Don't rely on your neighbor your Christian neighbor Don't rely on your Christian family don't rely on your past experiences you and him today and tomorrow Make the time We we reflect the importance of What we do by the time we give it do we not most things anyway?

Open the word close your eyes Spend time with him and if you say I can't and that's good to tell him that as well I can't live the life good Can't carry on good you need him. I don't have faith fine ask him go to him Do business with God and speak make time for him includes that surely it also includes surely faithful serious faithfulness Any relationship of love includes serious real faithfulness not half-hearted not Hypocritical but serious faithfulness a two-way relationship. I think sometimes we We misunderstand grace By making us we kind of think we're robots that it's all about God, but we have no responsibility We have every responsibility. We're made in his image and he empowers us Through the Holy Spirit to live by grace. Yes, we need him. That's absolutely true

But he empowers us to be in relationship with him and that means responsibility It means not cheating on the living God. It means being faithful and we're it's the hard work of Christian living it's they're rolling up our spiritual sleeves. We're not in heaven yet We're asked to serve him in In his strength and be faithful we're empowered to be pure and to honor him To live within his parameters because that is freedom. That's true freedom Of course, it's hard work But he says stand firm. He doesn't say lie back and luxuriate until the end He doesn't say just have a sauna until the end. He says stand firm until the end it's strong language and we need a strong spiritual backbone That comes from him

[30 : 39] Making time serious faithfulness and reflecting God in our lives that is not just Luxuriating in grace and taking grace but living grace living grace out You know I've talked about importance of you and him. That's absolutely right important, but you and him outworks itself in you and you With each other We're saved to be a people we once were not a people but now we are a people and We're saved to be in community with one another. I know it's much easier to be loners I know it's much easier just to go out on our own. We can say it's hard enough being a Christian I don't need the hassle of all the other Christians around about me giving me grief But that's not his model and it's not his pattern. We're to reflect God and live as a people showing grace and Showing the grace of God by our lifestyle. You're a miserable Christian That's because you think God's miserable

You reflect the kind of God you believe in Isn't that right? We reflect the people were around that we were with if you're God's miserable He's angry If he's unjust then that's how you live. That's what you think God is a God of grace Reflect that we reflect that we seek to reflect that and live that I'm not advocating the privatization of faith Far from it. Yes, I'm saying it's about you and God, but I'm saying I believe that's scriptural that it's It's that reflected life that we live in community So I think the challenge then is to return again, and I hope it's good. I hope I'm not repeating myself It's good to return to basics in our lives And for you to return to a basics, please don't rely on other people's prayers

Or just one morning of worship where you pray kind of corporately with others speak to God And do us that justice, you know do him that just so you speak to him You'll talk with him talk through things with him in prayer and listen for him in his word and ask for faith Which is his gift, you know stand firm in the faith That's what counts in that someone and it's a gift that he's longing to give us In our lives, it's simple Christian life is simple. It's like football people talk about football And you get all these analysts on after football games these days and they talk about in their Arrows here and there people and it's complicated. Everyone's complicated football is a simple game Score goes new win Spiritually the Christian life is a simple life It's complicated. There's too much complication talk with God return to the basics of your faith Stand firm in the faith this the other chance surely is to remember that this life isn't all that there is

If you're not a Christian, that's how you're living you're living as if this life is all that there is That's the lie of Satan To think that this life is all that there is make the most of it Please remember that Remember that there is a life to come and as Christians even more horrendously sometimes we live as if this life is all that there is Can I take the words of Jeff leech to finish with If we live like that live as if this life is all there is to live It'll leave me leave us feeling vacuous and shallow and ultimately very lonely May it not be the case when we have a loving father who wants relationship with us that we don't deal with these issues and These needs and truths in our lives I mean let's say briefly pray together

Lord God hear our prayers and hear our Requests to you Take your word we pray and apply it to our hearts preacher and hear our alike and May we stand firm to the end And that great knowledge because the gospel is going to be preached throughout the whole world in these days And many will come to faith and many will be saved and Those who stand firm to the end in that faith Where he promises to keep us That is the only place to be Lord may we be warned about our love growing cold and Who of us can't recognize that to a greater or lesser degree in our lives and May it be that warm encouragement to come again to him for his healing and For his help and may we live that grace and live that relationship of love with you and with each other in in all its cost

[35 : 54] Knowing that we have all the resources of the Holy Spirit in our hearts to live that life We ask in Jesus name. Amen.