

Remain Earnest Till The End

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[0 : 0 0] Hey guys, I'm Donnie. If you're new with us, I'm also one of the pastors. I feel like we've got us all up here today. Good to be with you guys, and sorry for all the announcements, but these are really sort of special things for us.

And so it's not normally this much, but yeah, it was all necessary and good. So I'm going to jump us right into the sermon. Thanks for you guys for joining us online. We are in the middle of a series through the book of Hebrews, which, I mean, for years and years, I've wanted us to do this.

And for me, it's not disappointing. It has been like good every single week. So we're seven weeks in. If you're just joining us, you can jump on our app or you can jump online. You can watch or listen to all those previous ones if you want to.

But let me just give you a little bit of context for this. We're not sure who the author is, but the audience is a church that's drifted off course. A bit of a community in crisis, a lot of distractions that we don't have time to kind of get into have sort of caused many of the folks in the church just to lose interest.

And so the writer of Hebrews, he writes to them, he calls them to come back, but he does it in a way by, not by saying you should really come back, by saying, look how good Jesus is. He entices them to come back because of how good Jesus is.

[1 : 1 8] Jesus is better than anyone or anything. And so that's his sort of modus operandi. Now, we, like them, have been a church that has been through a lot over the last 14 months or so.

And man, like them, we've faced a lot of distractions. And like them, we can find ourselves drifting off course. And so we, like them, need to see Jesus like they needed to see Jesus, as better than anyone or anything else.

And so today, we're going to go through, I think, probably the most difficult passage in the book. And I bring that up only because every now and again, Brian, who was just up here, he likes to, you know, if he gets given a slightly difficult text to preach, he moans and groans publicly in front of all of you about how, look what Donnie did to me again.

And I want to think, I'd like to think I could settle that today. This might be the hardest of them all. And so let's just end the argument. This is it. This is the moment, okay? I want to preface it by a sentence, a lot of different interpretations from people much smarter than me.

But I think what we're doing today is holding this text, this passage in context with the rest of the letter, which is really a sermon. And I think if you take it out of the context and you forget that it's a sermon, you can end up, you know, with some different interpretations.

[2 : 3 6] But remember, this is a sermon that's to a church by someone who loves them, but says, you're moving backwards. You're not moving forwards. You're drifting from maturity to immaturity.

You're like adults who want to go back to the bottle. When you remember the context of what's going on here, you can see why this preacher, he loves them. He's not going to hold back.

He's not going to pull any punches. He loves them, but he cares about them. So he says some pretty hard things to hear. So that's a bit of the context. Let's read it, and then we'll go through it.

Hebrews 5, we're going to start off in verse 11. So he says, about this, we have much to say. It's hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing. It's not really that hard to explain.

It's just you've become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again. The basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food.

[3 : 36] For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment, trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, of faith toward God, of instruction about washing, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, internal judgment.

And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, have tasted the goodness of the word of God, the powers of the age to come, and then fallen away to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it and produces a crop useful for those whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it's worthless and near being cursed, its end is to be burned.

Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things, things that belong to salvation. For God is not unjust as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown in his name in serving the saints as you still do.

[4 : 54] And we desire that each of one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not become sluggish or lazy, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Good gracious. What a passage. I grew up here in Moorhead, and specifically I grew up kind of on the like heading towards Crab Point, that sort of north end of 20th Street, that little area there.

We lived in multiple houses around there. And if you've ever been on Mayberry Loop Road, there's a super like sharp curve at one point in the road. And I grew up right around the corner from that sharp curve on a little gravel road called Mizell Drive.

And my brother and I, we were little, probably my boys days actually about nine and six. And I was given very specific instructions. I could ride my bike to the end of the gravel road and back.

We lived at the very back of the road. And so we did that, lots and lots and lots. And there was this one time, it was about old enough, so however old it was, when my parents could work and leave us at home. And, you know, we'd done this gravel road thing a bunch, and it wasn't really doing anything for us.

[6 : 02] You know, know what's there, know what's there, did it a whole lot. So I just decided, now's the time. You know, parents are gone, here's the moment, let's go.

And so I remember getting, I vividly remember this, getting to the end of that little, you can, if you drive that way out of here, you'll see what I'm talking about. There's this little gravel road, Mizell Drive, and you can picture me sitting there on my bike, there were some mailboxes with my brother, my younger brother who I enticed to come along with me.

And we began to turn left, which is right, like 50 feet away from this curve. And we're gonna branch out. I don't even know where we're going, but the world is our oyster, and we're going, baby.

And so I was there, I was having it, let's do it. And we were not 10 feet on our journey. It's clear, it's 10 feet enough to make it clear what we were doing.

We have now gotten onto this asphalt road, and we have left what we're supposed to do. We were not 10 feet into this journey. When my dad, for some reason, I don't see anybody, decided to come home early from work.

[7 : 02] And he comes around that curve and just drives into someone's yard. And I won't tell you what happened next, but you can fill in all kinds of blanks, and I'll just tell you that for me, it was a traumatic event.

Needless to say, I was left with a very strong impression and a soreness in this part of my body that reminded me going forward that this was not a good idea.

I was shook up. I was afraid. I was angry. I was sad. Maybe you could just take a second and pause and think of, is there any kind of, don't shout out loud, but just think of yourself. Do you have a memory like that?

Just something like that happened to you at any point? It'll help you with this if you do. Now, looking back on it, yeah, I was shook up, and it was traumatizing. I mean, I remember it.

But, man, there's no telling what could have happened if my dad hadn't come around that corner. I mean, really. I mean, looking at how God is in control of everything, I mean, who knows?

[8 : 05] I've had a few of those encounters with my boys where I've had to step in and be very strong about something, and it's left them shook.

It's left them crying and all those things. And I hope one day they'll look back and go, man, my dad just cared about me. Yeah, that freaked me out, but my dad really just cared about me.

And my dad's goal and my goal is just to protect them, you know? And that's really what this preacher's goal is here, to shake them up, because it's a terrifying thing to take God's grace for granted.

The preacher describes what happens when God gives you grace, when God saves you. And he's saying, I've watched all this happen to you guys. You repented from dead works.

You put your faith in God. He became part of the Christian community. You put your hope in the resurrection, eternal judgment. You were enlightened. You tasted the heavenly gift. You received the Holy Spirit. The word of God came alive to you.

[9 : 10] You realized there's an age to come where God is making all things new. I saw this happen to you. He's not saying, if these things happen, you know, select A, select B, your score is...

No, he says, I saw it. I know it to be true. And don't take it for granted. And in the beginning, for you guys who are newer to Christianity, you know, you're probably still in that kind of like just skipping around, this is the best thing ever season.

And it can be hard in those early days to even think it's possible to take it for granted. Just like it's... When I do premarital counseling, the couples are like, hey, you can skip that whole bit about getting over, you know, about conflict resolution because we're never going to fight, right, baby?

You know, like that... It feels crazy to think it's even possible. Not me and her. Oh, no. Oh, yeah. Better people than me or you have done it.

You don't want to be like Peter sitting around a fire denying he ever knew Jesus. Listen up. It's meant to shake us up because it can happen.

[10 : 24] If it can happen to Peter, it can happen to me and you. And this gets at the real concern that the preacher has here. He alludes to it in multiple places, but in verse 12, he says, chapter 6, he says, so that you may not be sluggish.

Now, that word's lazy or slothful or dull. He says, I don't want you to get lazy. I don't want you to get sluggish. And what we see through this passage is that immaturity and apathy are real causes for concern.

They're a real cause for concern. He's not saying, we're having this serious chat because you're not perfect. No, you're never the perfect this side of heaven. He's not saying, this is all because you've had one bad moment that one time.

No, we all have bad moments. We all have bad days. His issue is not that. His issue is twofold. It's immaturity and apathy. You've started to act like babies when you're grown up, so you're immature when you should be mature.

And worse than that, you don't even seem to care about it. You're apathetic. It's become normal to them to regress backwards, to drift backwards. And I think what's so concerning, as I've spent time trying to mine this text, what's so concerning to me is how unconcerning this kind of is.

[11 : 38] It's concerning to me that it's unconcerning. I don't know that you and I, if we were honest, would think that this, what he's describing, would be worthy of such a heavy, like, sit-down conversation.

I mean, he's having, like, an intervention with him. Do we think this warrants an intervention? I mean, don't we think he's overreacting a little bit? I mean, don't you want to say, hey, buddy, not all of us are preachers, you know? We got jobs. We got families.

We got hobbies. We can't sit around and read the Bible all day. They're not bowing down to pentagrams and sacrificing cats. They just hit snooze. Like we all wanted to do this morning, they just hit snooze on their relationship with Jesus.

Again and again and again and again. Is that so bad? Apparently it is. Apparently it's a big deal.

So what does he do? Well, he comes in, like dads probably came in this morning, banging a gong to wake them up. He wants to shake them. He wants to provoke them.

[12 : 41] But it's not just them that need a wake-up call, is it? Don't you and I feel like we could use a bit of this too? I mean, when 2020 started off, you know, it's like everything was around, you know, how discouraged we all were, how discouraged we all were, how discouraged we all were.

And, you know, someone was saying to me this week, I don't know that we're that discouraged anymore as much as we're just numb. Just feel numb. So many numbers and so many things and so many changes and so many challenges.

It's like it's discouraging for a while and you just kind of get numb to it. Don't feel anything anymore. Can't feel hot, can't feel cold. I remember thinking at the beginning of the whole COVID shutdown, man, I'm going to read my Bible more than I ever have in my whole life.

I look back and think, I read my Bible less than I did in my whole life. I just got numb. So what do we do? Beat ourselves up? Roll over?

Give up? No. Hearing this warning should wake us up to wanting more. That's what it should do. The gong banging is there to wake you up, not to make you put a pillow over your head harder.

[13 : 49] It's to wake you up. This is the whole point of the rebuke. Wake up to provoke us, to evaluation, to spur us, to engage our faith seriously, to make us want more, not to make us doubt our salvation.

And I want to just take a second on this because I think taken out of context, take some scissors, cut this passage out, put it over here by itself, ignore a lot of other scripture, you might have some problems.

But listen to what he says in verse 9. Though we speak in this way, we're saying some hard things, guys. In your case, beloved, loved, we feel sure.

Not like, I don't know, we could kind of go either way. No. Loved ones, we feel certain of better things. What kind of better things, though? Well, things that belong to salvation.

You know, if he wanted these guys to doubt their salvation, he didn't have to put that verse in there. If he'd have left that out, they could have been like, oh my gosh, what does this mean? I'm sure.

[14 : 51] He said, I'm sure you're saved. I'm trying to get you to act like it. That's the chat we're having. Stop acting like little babies isn't saying, you've become a little baby.

No, it's physically impossible. It's to say, come on, grow up. That's the conversation. You should be teachers. Now, instead of you writing on the chalkboard, you're now sitting at some tiny little baby desk.

He's provoking them by mocking them. And we don't know who this author is, but I'll tell you, as a preacher, reading what he's saying, I think this presupposes a deep relationship with this group of people.

A kind of mutual trust and mutual love. Otherwise, they would have read this. They would have heard this. I mean, if you don't know who this guy is, first time you've ever heard anything from him, what are you going to do with this letter?

I don't think so, buddy. That one didn't make me feel good. You know, that didn't hit me in my feels. You know, we'll throw that in the trash. The only reason that they kept reading past this and kept circulating this thing because it was drenched in love and in confidence.

[15 : 59] It didn't hold back any punches. But man, I think that this came from someone they knew and they knew loved them. Makes me think of Paul's letters to the Ephesians church where he says a very similar thing in Ephesians 4.15.

He says, we're speaking the truth in love. We are to grow up in every way and to him who is the head and to Christ. I love you guys but I'm going to say some hard true things because I want you to grow up.

That's what's happening here. Now what does that mean for us? I think a couple of things. One, we should crave maturity not settle for immaturity. When I got COVID back at Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving morning, mind you, with all the work already done and all the turkeys already brined, would have been epic not to get it on that day but that's the day.

I got it. I lost taste and smell and my first thought honestly was this is going to be the best weight loss plan I've ever had. I don't know if anyone else has thought that when they got it.

I thought, this is great. I like food. Now I can't taste food. That's great. Now I won't have to eat food. In fact, I thought, let me just try to get on some super low carb protein shakes.

[17 : 11] Ordered a bunch of them and got right in there. Got right on it. And I thought, this is what I'll do. I'll just drink. I'll get my nutrition from these shakes and supplements and I won't have to eat anything ever again.

This is great. Or for however long the steaks. I thought I'll be happy but I wasn't. And it wasn't just because of the gastrointestinal consequences of my newfound protein shake diet which I can tell you about another time.

It was because I wanted meat and not just meat. I wanted, honestly, I would even, vegetables. Let's do it baby. I wanted something to sink my teeth into.

Something, right? I wanted something. I was sick of shake after shake after shake. In fact, we would worry about an adult who growing up from baby to adult never wanted anything but milk.

We would have some serious concerns about that person. Specialists would be involved. So why are we okay with being Christians who have no appetite for anything that will challenge us or take us deeper?

[18 : 18] One other preacher says it like this. He says, I meet a settled prejudice even among people who are highly intelligent in other areas. He's saying it's not that they can't read or don't read.

No, they work in demanding professions. They read serious newspapers and magazines and they would be ashamed not to know what's going on in the world. I meet this prejudice though against them against making any effort at all to learn what the Christian faith is about.

And as a result, we find both inside the churches and outside an extraordinary ignorance of who Jesus really was, what Christians have believed and what should believe about God and the world and how the entire Christian story makes sense, what the Bible contains and not least how individual Christians fit in it, how their lives and their thoughts should be transformed by the power of the gospel.

He goes on, it seems that the most people can be persuaded to take on board is another small helping of warm milk. Listen, if you're new to Christianity, saying that you are a baby or need milk is not an insult because, I mean, Jesus told this to Nicodemus who was called the teacher of Israel.

So he was a smart guy, full-grown adult, very smart, and Jesus said, Nicodemus, you have to be born again. You've got to put everything aside that you think you know and be born again, as it were, and everything's new and it's different and it's a lot to take on.

[19 : 40] And so the best thing, what you need are those basics. But if you're not new to Christianity, if you're not new, if you've been a follower of Jesus for some time, this passage ought to sting.

It ought to sting a little bit. I think too often, when we read the passage, we get lost in the loose salvation debate and we miss the rebuke. We don't reckon with the rebuke itself, which is, hey, grow up.

And I want to say, I feel it sharply. It's stung me going through this again and again and again over the last couple of weeks thinking about it. I'm not pointing fingers at you.

I feel it myself. And I also want to say that if it's us, well, we probably came by it honest because so much of the American Christian culture caters to it. We have, we've taken anything that could possibly be difficult and put it in a NutriBullet.

We've made everything into a smoothie. We've normalized not knowing much and not caring much. In fact, you read through this passage and you think, gosh, this does not feel like elementary doctrines.

[20 : 48] You know, the list that he gives. N.T. Wright says it like this. He says, if this is the early church's ABCs, many of us are getting along with the spiritual equivalent of grunts and hand signals. We haven't even learned ABCs.

We're just like pointing and making noises. We don't even use the word disciple much anymore. Even if we do, we mean a certain kind of really special ops Christian, but not normal.

But we can't settle for that just because it's become normal. We need this to provoke us for more. So what does this preacher hope his students will know or do? Well, he gives them in verses 1 through 3 these elementary doctrines, he says, that he wants them to leave those things and go on to maturity.

He doesn't want to lay again a foundation. It's already been laid. He doesn't want to lay it again. The repentance from dead works, faith toward God, instruction about washings, and so on. Now, is he saying that repentance and faith and resurrection and all those things are useless and so we should just chuck them out?

No. They're the basics. They're the foundation. It has to happen first. If you've ever had a home build or watched a building being built, that foundation is super important. It takes a long time to get it right, an annoyingly long time to get it right.

[22 : 03] But you don't just build a foundation and go, well, this is it. Look at this pad. It's so beautiful. I never thought it was going to be this good. This is it. We can just stop right here, guys, actually. I'll live here on this pad.

No, it's there for things to be built on and so that's the second thing I think this means for us is we should learn the basics well, get the foundation right and then build upon them. That ABCs is a great example.

The song is awesome for kids. It's great. It's great to learn those ABCs by learning that song. Works so good. But if you got to college and your first chance to do some kind of presentation from the class and you got up and said, here it is, and you started singing ABCDEFG, HIJK, LMNOP, next time won't you sing with me?

I don't know that everyone would think that everything was okay with you. It would feel odd that by the time you got to college, this is where you're at. No, we don't chuck out the ABCs.

We just kind of, like they're just there. We rely on them all the time. All that I'm doing right now, talking, reading, you listening, all this is us relying on that little song. That little song's very important but we've gone on to build on top of it.

[23 : 23] And the writer expects these new Christians are going to learn a solid foundation. They're going to learn A plus, you know, two plus two and ABC. They're going to learn the basics, repentance, faith, what our behavior should be like, the resurrection, so on and so on.

We're going to get a good solid foundation and then we're going to grow on top of that. We're going to mature beyond that. We're going to build on it. It's going to take a long time.

No, it's going to take a lifetime. There's no life hack YouTube video on this. You watch three minutes, boom, got it. Hebrews 6, 10 through 12, for God is not unjust as to overlook your work, the love that you've shown in his name, serving the saints as you still do.

We desire each of you to show the same earnestness and have the full assurance of hope until the end so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promise.

It's not a sprint, it's a marathon, and faith and patience are required to finish the race well. Faith and patience.

[24 : 33] Those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Guys, I thought long and hard about it. There's no way to make faith and patience sexy. Nothing I can do. I mean, and culturally, we are into hip and easy and trendy and instant.

We're always inclined to look to something new. But scripture here and other places prizes what Eugene Peterson famously described as a long obedience in the same direction. Jesus described it as putting your hands to the plow and fixing your eyes forward.

Been to a lot of weddings, some really fancy ones, and it's always fun. You know, everyone's dressed up and this couple, they're young, they're beautiful, and they got it all, you know, they're all excited, everyone's excited, and it's great.

But what's more impressive, if you've ever been to a wedding like this where, you know, they're there and then at some point in time they go, hey, you know, get on the dance floor, you married people, and then they kind of work through, been married longer than, been married longer than, been married longer than.

Have you ever been there for that moment? You know, when it gets to like, what's more impressive, that couple who just said yes or that couple who strolls out, walker, barely can move, 55, 65 years.

[25 : 55] I mean, that's like, whoa. Especially if you're married, you know how hard marriage can be. You think, that's incredible. I want to get time with them. What in the world have you guys done?

Faith and patience. Doesn't sound impressive, but it is. God saw they worked and loved so well in the beginning. Of course, the preacher says, of course he saw it.

Of course he's not going to forget it. Did he see what we did? Yeah, he saw, he remembers, but don't stop there. Don't let your stories of faith get dusty.

Keep leaning in over the long haul. Die with your dukes up. Show the same earnestness to the end. There's a guy named Caleb in the Old Testament who, he's there, he's one of the spies that goes into the promised land, comes back out, says, this is great, this is going to be good, this is awesome, this is for us, and everyone's like, no.

So, 40 years goes around, everyone dies, and you've got Caleb and Joshua left here, and he was 40 years old on that first trip in, and he was ready to do this.

[27 : 06] He's like, I'm going, let's go, and no one wanted to go. So, now we pick up the story in Joshua 14. Now behold, the Lord has kept me alive, Caleb says, just as he said, these 45 years.

Since the time spoke the word to Moses while Israel walked in the wilderness, and now behold, I am this day 85 years old. What does Caleb say? I'm still as strong today as I was that day that Moses sent me.

My strength is now, it says, my strength was then for war, for going and coming, so now give me this hill country on which the Lord spoke to me on that day. What a picture of growing old well.

And something about that doesn't just feel like a Bible verse, that's like written into our soul. There's songs and songs and songs that get at that. I was thinking of one this week by the famous George Jones, the possum.

He's got this song where he says, I've still got neon in my veins, this gray hair don't mean a thing, right? I'd just like to pause and say we quoted George Jones in a sermon and something feels right about that.

[28 : 12] But that like, that like neon in my veins, I got my dukes up, I'm not giving up yet, I'm not dead yet, put me in coach like that. We see it all through the Bible.

Moses actually in Exodus 13, there he is hauling Joseph's bones towards the promised land because Joseph's dying wish was, I want to be there one way or another.

So since I'm dying, I want you to swear to me that you'll take my bones with you. Man, gosh, we've lost a lot of that because in our culture we live to quit.

We've seen success as how young you can stop and that's fine in finance and business and all the rest but what a tragedy in the kingdom. Everyone who's got the stories the stories of God's faithfulness again and again can so easily see it as their purpose in life to collect seashells.

I'm not saying it's wrong to enjoy retirement and those things but man, we don't ever retire from the mission of Jesus and those of us who are younger need people who are further down the road to tell us, hey, I've been there and I've been through it and Jesus is going to get you through it.

[29 : 29] We need it. Young couples need older couples to say, hey, you know what? We used to act just like that. Y'all need to quit it. Here's what we did. Here's what we learned. Come on, let's go. We need that.

So my friends, don't just start well. Aim to finish strong. Aim to grow old making much of Jesus and living for him with all your might. It brings us to another thing to consider which is something beyond ourselves.

In Hebrews 5, 12, he says, you ought to be teachers by now. You ought to be. We're not the only ones to consider. We say every Sunday at the end, for those of you who are part of our church, we say, you know, you have six days to make disciples and push back darkness all for the sake of the gospel.

We don't say that because it's cool or catchy because that's what Jesus told us to do, to make disciples. And the reality is that we are all making disciples. Every single one of us are making disciples. Disciples are imitators or followers.

People are imitating us. The question is, what kind of disciple are we making? Our apathy will lead to those imitating us to be apathetic.

[30 : 35] Our indifference will definitely lead to the people who look to us being indifferent. Our immaturity will keep others from growing immaturity.

Gosh, this sermon's harsh. Wish we'd get back to the good old days where we just talked about Jesus. Mark 9, 42, Jesus, whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin will be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.

All right, we'd like to go back to Hebrews. That sounds good. Let's go back there. Our influence on people should be taken seriously. Listen, you know what he doesn't say?

By this time, you guys could have been teachers. No, he says, by this time, you ought to have been teachers. The difference there is it's not an enabling word. Like, look, this could help you.

No, it's an obligatory. This should have happened already. You ought to have been teachers by now. He expects it, like, in the same way, like, you would expect that going to college and spending all this time to learn and get a degree would lead to you, I don't know, using it.

[31 : 43] You know, learning your ABCs leads to you actually talking. Like, there should be a point to this. And he says, this should have happened. The goal was for us to be able to get to the point where you could say what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11.

Be imitators of me as I am of Christ. Follow me like I follow him. I don't know how many must feel comfortable saying that kind of thing. I want to say to you, you might be thinking, gosh, I thought you guys had it all covered.

I mean, look, pastor, pastor, pastor, look, volunteers, everything seems like it's going great. We don't have it covered. You know, every time we sit down to place people in community groups, it's the same conversation every time.

It's like, man, who else could lead? Who else could lead? Call them up. See if they're willing to. Come on, please. The problem is not now and never will be, never has been, too many workers. The problem is always too much work.

Luke 10, Jesus said it was going to be like that. He said, the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. So, we need you. Those of you who are down this road of following Jesus, we need you to grow up.

[32 : 52] We need you to, because you ought to be teachers. You ought to be helping. That's the goal. That's what God puts us here to do. We grow as disciples and then we make disciples.

I love how it doesn't just end with like some, like the negative example of Hebrews 5. In Hebrews 6, he says, look, you've got people to look to. Those are through faith and patience and inherit the promises.

So, don't be like the teachers who've gone back to the milk. Be like this crowd that's just gone on and we have some heroes in this church who have gone on, who have gone on, who have gone on, who have faced hard things, hard things, hard things, and their dukes are up.

Man, they've got some scars to prove it, but their dukes are up. And, man, there are people in this church who through faith and patience, they've lived this life that we can look to and we can learn from.

And we should be. All of us need people that are ahead of us that we can look to. So, run your race well as you look ahead to those who've run in front of you, but, man, we don't even want to end there.

[33 : 56] This is where we want to land. Because even those people are going to let you down. I mean, they will. Eventually, they'll disappoint you some way or another. So, while there's many to look to, there's none so good as Jesus.

What do you do if you're feeling this morning like, mm, I've become sluggish. Man, I've rolled over in my fight against sin.

I just, honestly, what do you feel? If I had to be honest, I've hit snooze like a thousand times on my relationship with Jesus. I can't believe that alarm's even going off anymore.

What do you do? You look to Jesus. Hebrews 12. We're surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses.

We are. History's got one and we've got one in our church. So, let us lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that's set before us looking to Jesus.

[35 : 01] If that's you, if you feel sluggish, if you feel lazy, if you feel like you've just rolled over in your fight with sin, you feel like you just hit snooze a bunch, what should you do? You should just look to Jesus. You just need to look at him, look to him again.

The founder, the perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. That's the race he ran. Yeah, we got a hard one to run but not like that. we all face hard times, we get discouraged, we get sluggish.

When that happens, we shouldn't doubt our salvation or give up, we should fix our eyes on Jesus, the one who ran in our place for the joy set before him, the joy of pleasing his father, the joy of being your savior, the joy of being with me and you forever.

As we, as we look to close here as the band comes up, you know, these kinds of warnings, like I was telling you about that story with me and the gravel and the bike and all that, those warnings lead to insecurity.

They provoke insecurity anyway. So if you're here and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, you might be thinking, gosh, I mean, this question comes up again and again in the scriptures, what should I do to be saved?

[36 : 12] That is the, that's a great question. It gets asked in the scriptures, what should I do to be saved? And the answer is not, do better, try harder, and fingers crossed, you'll see a light at the end of the tunnel one day.

No, the answer is what we see him say here, look, I saw what happened to you, you repented from your dead works and that means like you saw everything, you're good in your bad deeds as worthless and you turned your back on them and you ran to Jesus.

You repented, you turn, you run towards faith in God. So if that's where you're at this morning going, what should I do to be saved? We would say, man, it's right here.

Turn away from everything and run to Jesus. And if that's you, it would be such an honor to talk with you about that when we're done here in just a minute. If you're here or watching this and you're already a follower of Jesus, maybe you haven't done well this last season.

It would be easy to understand. Maybe you, like me, became dull of hearing, a little sluggish, a little numb. Does that mean that we've lost our salvation? I know what that feeling feels like.

[37 : 18] It's a terrifying feeling. And the answer that I think we see in this text and we see everywhere else is no. in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things, things that belong to salvation.

Does he still love me, though? Because it's been a long time since I felt like I was faithful to him. Does he still love me? It's interesting that the writer of Hebrews uses the word beloved.

It's hard not to think of John 3.16. God so loved the world he gave his beloved son.

That's how this thing started with us and Jesus was not us keeping all the rules and being so great. No, it started with God so loving us that he gave his beloved son. The beloved son came to make us beloved.

So we feel sure of better things for you, things that belong to salvation. Not because your salvation or mine is dependent on how well we've run the race, but because it depends on Jesus and how well he ran his race.

[38 : 26] Should we feel convicted? I hope so. I do. And if you feel like you just need to grow in some of this, you don't even know where to start. I don't know what the basics are. I don't know how to make disciples.

I would like to learn some of those deeper, harder things, but I don't even know where to... If you will email us at the office, one of our pastors will contact you. We have a laundry list of resources. We will get you plugged in.

We will help you. But for now, let's take a moment to honor Jesus and to thank him. That's what communion does for us.

It gives us a moment to fix our eyes on Jesus, the beloved who died so that we would be beloved. take that bread and that cup if you're here and you're a follower of Jesus and no, it's nothing fancy to look at, but what it means is incredible.

It means that we're loved by God. Hebrews 9 actually says because of his... Him with his own blood, because of what he did with his own blood, he has... Hebrews 9 tells us, secured for us in eternal redemption.

[39 : 33] Jesus has locked it down. He has secured for us. So think about how faithless you've been and how faithless I've been and think about how faithful he still is and thank him. Honor him as you eat and drink.

Holy Spirit, we pray that you would provoke us and wake us up. What this preacher wanted and what this preacher wants is for you to cause us to wake out of our slumber and to live for you all the days of our life.

Help us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.