Holding Fast in Hope and Fear: The Life of Real Christian Worship

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Preacher: William Philip

[0:00] Well, we're going to turn now to our Bible reading this morning and to the place of certainty, of hope, and of clarity. And what a relief it is to do that. We're reading together in Hebrews chapter 12.

Hope you've remembered to bring your own Bibles this morning. And we'll read the whole chapter together. Following on from the great cloud of witnesses of the faithful who live looking to the future, looking above to the Lord God in heaven, the apostle says, Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely. And let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder, the pioneer, the champion and perfecter of faith, who for the joy, I'll explain this later, but let's read this slightly differently, who instead of the joy that was placed before him, endured the cross. Despising the shame. And is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.
In your struggle against sin, you've not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses your sons? My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.
[1:45] For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives. It's for discipline that you have to endure.

God is treating you as sons. For what son there is there whom his father does not discipline? If you're left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.
Besides this, we've had earthly fathers who disciplined us. We respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time, as it seemed best to them.
But he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant or joyful.
By the way, that's the same word joyful as in verse 2, the joy set in front of Jesus. All discipline seems painful rather than pleasant or joyful.
[2:50] But later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore, lift up your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Strive or pursue, along with everyone, peace and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.
That no one is immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected.
He found no opportunity to repent, although he sought it. That is, he sought the blessing with tears. For you have not come, have not drawn near.
That's one of those great words of Hebrews. You have not drawn near what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words may the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.
[4:13] For they could not endure the order that was given, even if a beast touches the mountains and it shall be stoned. Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, I tremble with fear.

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But you have drawn near to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.
See to them that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.
At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens. This phrase yet once more indicates the removal of all that can be shaken.
That is, things that have been made. In order that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.
[5:44] And thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence, reverent fear, and awe. For our God is a consuming fire.

Amen. And may God bless to us his word. I'll turn up in your Bibles if you would to Hebrews chapter 12.
And our title this morning is Holding Fast in Hope and Fear. Perhaps an apt title for these current times.
If you look at the very last couple of verses of the chapter, you'll see it concludes with a summons which actually sums up the whole message of the chapter. Therefore, let us offer to God acceptable worship, pleasing worship, with reverence, with fear, and awe.
The end of the whole letter, actually, at the end of chapter 13, finishes with a similar focus on doing God's will, doing what is pleasing, what is acceptable in his sight. And what the whole message of Hebrews is exhorting his readers to do, is what that final prayer is for, and what this chapter is all about.
[7:04] Jesus, remember back in chapter 10, we're told Jesus, chapter 9, has purified our souls so that we might serve, so that we might worship the living God.

And so at the end of chapter 10, after these wonderful chapters, spelling out what God our Savior has accomplished for us, do you remember there was that threefold exhortation? Therefore, let us draw near in faith, let us hold fast the confession of our hope, and let us encourage one another to love.
Faith, hope, and love. We saw last time in chapter 11 that we stand in a great line of those of faith, that is, those who did not shrink back into this world, that's the way of destruction, but those who had faith and preserved their souls.
A great cloud of witnesses all through chapter 11, whose faith lasted, whose faith endured right to the end, who grew stronger as they gave glory to God, living as people of the future.
And now then, in chapters 12 and 13, we come to the point of application of that to us. Notice all through chapter 12, it's we and us, and it's you I'm speaking to, he's saying.
[8:18] And he's showing us what that faith is to look like in the present life of real Christian worship, what it means to serve God, to worship God as he wants us to. He's showing us that real faith is expressed in unwavering hope, that's what chapter 12 is about.

And in unquenchable love, which is what chapter 13 is about. And that is real Christian worship. Verses 28 and 29 here call us to worship.
They're summing up the whole of the chapter that's gone before in chapter 12, and what's coming after in chapter 13. Let brotherly love continue. So in a sense, chapter 12 is filling out that command of chapter 10, verse 23, to hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering.
And chapter 13 fills out chapter 10, verse 24. Let's stir one another up to love and to good works.
So what kind of acceptable worship, then, is this chapter 12 calling us to?
Lots of people in the church today, very concerned to talk about what worship looks like. Well, read through this chapter. It's very striking, isn't it? Nothing at all about singing, nothing at all about praying, nothing at all about the sacraments or anything else like that.
[9:35] No comments on songs, ancient or modern. No comments on tunes, major or minor. No comments on instruments, whether classical or funky, or indeed whether they should be absent altogether.

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All the sorts of things that people argue about. No, for the apostle, this whole matter of acceptable worship is not about singing, it's about struggle. Struggle against sin.
It's not about drum kits. It's about discipline. The discipline of the Lord. It's not about even song. It's about endurance. About enduring to the end as followers of Christ.
Look at how verse 1 at the beginning and verse 28 at the end of the chapter bracket the chapter with what is really the same command. Just expressed in two different ways. Verse 28. Let us offer acceptable worship.
Verse 1. Let us lay aside weight and sin and let us run with endurance the race set before us. Looking to Jesus. The chapter is a call to worship.
[10:35] It's a call to worship that pleases God. And it's a call for Christians to endure in faith to the end. To hold fast in hope and fear.

Not to give up. Not to go back to our former way of life. Especially with the many temptations that there are all around about us to do so. Hebrews has been very realistic, hasn't it, about these many pressures that we live in.
We've seen that repeatedly. You see it again in verse 3 here. Look, the weariness. The weariness that constant hostility engenders. And the faint heartedness that insults bring, that persecutions bring.
Well, I'm sure some of us here are very aware of these kinds of pressures that come on your lives that just grind you down and make you weary with the Christian battles.
And every one of us in this room knows plenty. In fact, we know far too much, don't we? About the entanglements of sins that cling so closely. So it's easy to feel weary.
[11:40] It's easy to feel faint-hearted in our fight of faith. But the apostle is writing to stiffen our spines. To put fresh strength into everyone who's wavering.

Both back then, but also today among us. And the message is in this chapter that all of these things that we might see actually as hindrances to our worship of God, keeping us from worship, are in fact part of the very worship that God has called us to as believers in these last days.
The life of real Christian worship, of Christian faith that is pleasing to God, is simply the life that holds fast in hope and fear right to the very end, through every battle that we face.
And that's what this chapter is about. It's a long one, but it's not very complex. So we're just trying to get its message clear under four headings. First of all, holding fast to the confession of our hope so as to please God means being clear about the real perseverance of the Christian.
The real Christian life in these last days is about eternity, not about the ephemeral, this passing world. In this world, our lives are a pilgrimage.
[13:01] They're a long distance race which requires perseverance. That's what verse 1 and the first line of verse 2 are telling us here. And we are to run with endurance to the end, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the perfecter, the pioneer, the great champion of faith.

Now we've talked already many times in Hebrews about this matter of perseverance. And we've seen, I hope, how Hebrews is not interested at all in the kind of speculations that we're so often taken up with.
Well, can real Christians fall away? Or if not, well, why are these warnings written to them? Why are they real warnings? All of these sorts of things. No, no, no. He is not interested in hypothetical questions.
What he is interested and determined in is that real Christians and real churches do persevere and do not fall away. So all through the letter we've seen these same exhortations.
Chapter 3, verse 1. Consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession who was faithful. And he goes on to say, since we then will share also in Christ if we hold fast our confidence to the end.
[14:07] Chapter 4, verse 14. Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. Chapter 10, verse 36.

You have need of endurance so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised. And so on. Just like all the faithful ones in the past in chapter 11 that he goes on to speak about.
And that's the first encouragement he gives us here in verse 1 to endure. We have a great cloud of witnesses gone before us who did endure. And what was it that marked out their faith?

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We saw it last time. They had their eyes not on the ephemeral, this passing world, but on the reward. That's what made Moses refuse the rewards of Egypt and choose the reproach of Christ as a greater reward.
Because he was looking to the reward. And to the rewarder. He saw, he had before his eyes all his life the invisible God. All Abraham's seed, we're told.
[15:08] We're looking for what was to come. Looking for the heavenly kingdom. The abiding city that God had built. They all, chapter 11, verse 35, were looking for a better resurrection.

But they saw it still only afar off. They were looking forward. They were looking to the Savior to come. That's how they endured. And that is how we will endure, he says there in the first line of verse 2.
That's our second great encouragement. Because we do have something even better than they had to spur us on. Notice what he is saying and what he isn't saying. He's not saying, is he?
Try and become like those mighty giants of all. Try and be inspired by their lives and be like them. No, he's saying they endured because of where their faith was fixed.
And where it was focused. And it was focused on the Savior to come. On Jesus, whom you now see and know so much more clearly, even than they did. We have the same hope.
[16:08] We have the same faith as they had. But we, he says, have it. And we have everything so much better. Do you remember? They saw and they greeted these promises from afar.

Chapter 11 told us. But now Jesus has come. His work is finished. He's the founder. He's the pioneer. The perfecter. He's the great champion of faith.
Who has brought perfection for us. Remember we saw that in chapter 2. Same word. Same description of Jesus as the founder. The great champion of salvation.
Who is bringing many sons and daughters to glory. Through his perfect work. Through tasting death. That he might give us life everlasting. And so we are running our life.
Our race of life looking to him. Not just as an example. Although, of course, he is the great example of faith and faithfulness. But not just as the example. But as the great enabler.
[17:05] The champion of faith. Who has perfected for all time. Those whom he is bringing to glory. So how do we run our race? Well, by looking to Jesus alone.

As the beginning and as the end of our salvation. By trusting him alone. All the way. That's so important. If you try to run your Christian race.
Just looking at the performance of the other runners. Just trying to emulate those that you consider to be heroes of faith in the past. Or the heroes that you look to in the present.
If that's where you're looking. There's a very big chance. That you'll give up. But there's nobody in this room. And no Christian in the past has got the power to bring you to glory.
In fact, if you look too much at other Christians. You might find yourself despairing. Because you feel rather feeble in comparison. Isn't that right? That's why you've got to be careful with Christian biographies.
[18:07] They're a great resource. A great encouragement. A wonderful thing for us to read. But, especially for certain personalities. They can become discouraging and depressing. Some Christian biographies are written, you know, as hagiography.

As though the person they're writing about never sinned. You sometimes think they're more holy than Jesus. And the danger is you can surround yourself with all of these ideas of what Christians are like. And you can become very depressed.
So, you've got to be careful. If you're that sort of person, probably Christian biographies aren't for you. But Jesus has got power to make you endure.
And me. And we must endure. Because the race is not yet over. The Christian is one who is on the road to eternity. To the reward. To the resurrection.
That's the constant message, isn't it? Of the whole New Testament. Paul says in Philippians chapter 3. It's not that I've yet attained it. So, I'm pressing on for the reward of the upward call.
[19:06] Through God and Christ. And that's why we've got to resolutely put aside, he says here. All the distractions, all the things that can entangle us. Or else, we'll find ourselves settling merely for the things of this world.

The ephemeral. Not the real prize of Christ, which is eternal. That's why he says Christianity is not to get tangled up. Merely with things of this world.

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Christian people, Christian church should not be mainly tangled up with political issues and social issues. And things. That's where liberal Christianity has lost its way. Or with the perfectionism in this world.
That was the great thing of some of the holiness movements of the last century. Or with the prosperity in this world. That is so much the case in the church around the world today. And especially with the TV evangelists and so on.
And the charlatans. The sort of thing that they're offering us. Now, the real Christian life from the beginning. In these days and in our day. All the more. Is focused on eternity.
[20:12] So we are people pressing on. Persevering. In hope of what is still to come. But why does it have to be such a slog?

Why is it such a marathon? Why can't it just be a sprint? Or maybe just that sort of not too arduous middle distance run. That was always my one at school.
The 800 and the 1500 meters. It's actually my school champion. That's very hard to believe. I know looking at me now. But I never had the patience for a marathon. Or for even a half marathon. Why is our race such a marathon?
Well, it is. It's to be a life of patient endurance. The Bible tells us. Because. Look at verses 2 to 13. These verses show us, you see.
That to hold fast to our confession of hope. Means that we're to be absolutely clear. About a second thing. And that is the real pattern of the Christ. And that tells us that the real Christian life.
[21:14] Is one of travail and not tranquility. In this world. Our lives. Share a pattern. And that pattern is of the Son of God. And that pattern.

Is one that proves our paternity. And it's also a pattern that is perfecting us. To share. In his glorious holiness. Our way, therefore.
Says verses 2 to 4. Will be to share. The way of shame. The pattern for Jesus. Was that his path to glory and exaltation.
Was a road of suffering. A road of hostility. Of death. And so. Verse 2. Instead of joy now. Pleasure now. Which was a real possibility.
Set before Jesus. He chose instead. To endure the cross. To despise the shame. He braved it. Unafraid. Look at verse 2 there.
[22:09] Our translation says. For the joy set before him. That's how most translations put it. And I have to say. I've always taken it. And I suspect you have. As because of.

Because of the joy set before him. But in fact. Some of the best scholars point out. That word therefore. Really means instead of. It means in place of. It means in substitution for.
It doesn't mean because of. It's actually the same word. That's used for. In verse 16. Esau. Sold his birthright. For. A single meal.
In exchange for. A single meal. It's translated as. Instead. In our Bibles. In James 4. Verse 15. It's translated as. In place of. In Matthew chapter 2.
Verse 22. Where we're told. Archelaus. Reigned in place of. His father. Herod. So I think. Actually. What this verse is saying to us. Is not that it was because of.
[23:04] The future joy. That Jesus was looking to. And inspired by. But. What this is saying is that. There was worldly joy. Worldly pleasure. In front of him.

His for the taking. But he turned his back on it. In his earthly life. As Moses did. In chapter 11. Verse 26. Choosing rather.
The cross of shame. Than the crown of glory. It's the same word. Joy there. That's translated. Pleasant. In verse 11. Jesus chose not. Pleasant.
In the present. But pain. Something deeply costly. In his earthly path. And that is why now.
He has been exalted. At the right hand. Of the majesty on high. It's exactly the pattern. That Paul gives in. Philippians chapter 2. Isn't it? Jesus did not grasp hold. Of the glory that was his. But chose instead.
[24:01] Death on the cross. Therefore. God has exalted him. And that's Christ's way. It's his pattern. It's the way of shame.

And hostility. So he says in verse 3. You say. Don't you. Grow weary and faint. You have not yet had. To endure that ultimate battle.
With sin. Verse 4. You've not yet. Had to shed your blood. For God's sake. But that might come. He's saying. And that might be so.

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Mightn't it. In the world today. It is so. For many of our brothers and sisters. But he's saying. Be encouraged. Not discouraged. By that pattern. Look at verses 5 to 8. You see. The way of shame. Is in fact.
He says. The way. Of true sonship. It's a pattern. That he says. Proves our paternity. God is treating you as sons. You see.
[24:56] It's not just that Jesus. Is our example. The reality is something. Far greater than that. He is bringing. Many sons. To glory. That's what we were told.

Back in chapter 2. And you remember. When he said that. He said. And to do that. Jesus was made. Like his brothers. In every respect. To win our salvation. Well now. He's saying.
That's through him. We are all being made. Like him. Like our brother. Jesus Christ. So that we will share. In an intimate way. In his life. And in his death. And therefore. In his resurrection.
And in his glory. Verse 7. It's for discipline. That you have to endure. God is treating you. As sons. And verse 8.
Crucially. It's this pattern. Of perseverance. Through trial. It's not a life. Of tranquility. That proves. That you are legitimate. Real. Old children of God. Not false ones.
[25:52] That's so important. Isn't it? Because you see. When we're in a struggle. When we're battling. That's when sometimes. We think. Isn't it? As Christians. That maybe there's something. Wrong with me. Maybe there's something.

Wrong with my faith. Maybe there is. Something else. That I need. Some blessing. Some new experience. Some practice. Perhaps belonging. To that group of people.
Over there. Those Christians. Who don't have any travel. Who only have tranquility. And peace. And joy. Surely they're the ones. Who must be the real children of God. And I'm lacking something. But Hebrews says.
Where there's all blessings. And no battles. They're illegitimate children. Verse 8. It's this pattern. Of the Christ.
That proves. That you're his. That you're true sons of God. Like him. It's the way of true sonship. And. Verses 9 to 11. It's the way of true shaping us.
[26:50] For glory to come. That's what these verses are saying. All good fathers discipline their children. Verse 9. How much more. Our heavenly father. Who loves us infinitely.

God is disciplining us. He says. For our good. Verse 10. Not just to prepare us for earthly maturity. So we'll flourish. And not flounder in life.
That's what happens to people. Who are not parented properly. Who don't have any discipline. They will flounder in life. But not just our earthly life. He's saying. So that we will share. In his holiness.
That means his gift. Of eternal life. The peaceful fruit of holiness. That verse 11. Speaks of. The peace and holiness. Of seeing the Lord. In glory forever. That verse 14.
Speaks of. You see. He's saying. It's not our self-discipline. He's talking about here. Self-discipline is good. It's very important. We need it. But he's saying. This is God's discipline. Upon our lives.
[27:44] Through hardship. And travail. And he is shaping us. Through that. Into the pattern of his son. So that we might share forever.

Forever. In his wonderfully fruitful holiness. In our lives. In this world. And forever. In the glory to come. And yes. Look at verse 11.
Of course. It seems painful. In the present. It doesn't seem pleasant. It's not the joy. That we would love. To have in our present lot. Just as Christ's road was painful.
Deeply painful. But it is the only road. That will shape us. Us. Like Jesus. As true. Sons of God. Who are not.
Illegitimate fakes. And that's a real encouragement. Verse 12. To lift our drooping hands. And our knees. When things are tough. To recognize. That this is the pattern of Christ.
[28:39] In our lives. We might feel lame. We might feel hopeless. But no. He says. It's the opposite.

It's the way of life. Verse 13. It's the way of healing. Our life. And our healing. Forever and ever. And that. You see. Understanding that. Is what's going to make. A real practical difference.
To our lives. We often think. Don't we. When things get a bit easier. When things get a bit better. More calm. Then I'll be able to endure. And really flourish. As a Christian.

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No. What verses 12 and 13. Are saying. Is that it's in the path. Of dogged. Enduring faith. In the midst. Of much. That's far from pleasant. It's that. That will bring.
Renewed health. And strength. To your spiritual life. That's what happens. In endurance training. Not that I know anything about it. But it is in doing it. That you get. The toughened muscles.
[29:34] So that you'll endure. You don't magically. Get those things first. And then do endurance training. Well. So it is. In the real Christian life. It's amid the travails. Not in a life of tranquility.

That we're trained. That we're shaped. In a pattern of life. That conforms to our brother. The Lord Jesus Christ himself. And shows us.
To be true children of God. Forever. And so we're to keep running. Keep struggling on. Keep striving. Not taking any of that for granted. That's why verses 14 to 17.
Are here. You see. We must not think. That we can be passive. In this race. We need to be very clear. Thirdly. About the real peril. Of complacency. The real Christian life.
He tells us. In these last days. Is about striving. Not about selling out. Our lives. He says. Are in real peril. And so together. We must help each other.
[30:32] Hold fast to the gospel. And do it with energetic constancy. Not with easy going complacency. Verse 14. We must strive. We must pursue.

Along with everyone. That is all together. In the church. Pursue. The peace and holiness. Without which none. Will see the Lord. He's not talking there. About pursuing peace. With one another. He's saying.
One another. Have to pursue peace. And holiness. Just another way. Of referring to the peace. And righteousness. Of verse 11. It's our future. Through what Christ.
Has done for us. Chapter 10. Verse 14. Christ has perfected. Forever. Those who are being. Made holy. Being sanctified. Set apart. For God.
That is our inheritance. Peace. And holiness. With God. Forever. It doesn't come by our effort. Of course not. Look at verse 15. It's plain. It comes by God's grace.
[31:24] But. We must pursue that grace. We'll obtain that grace. Ultimately. By keeping running the race. Of faith. Until the end. Not by abandoning it.

Not by slipping back. But by striving. He has no pleasure in those. Who shrink back. Remember chapter 10. So he says.
We. Need to see to it. That no one sells out. No one. Fails to obtain the reward. That can happen. He says. Through complacency. Through carelessness.
And. Notice. These things are contagious. In the church. One root of bitterness. He says. Can defile many others. Quoting there. From Deuteronomy.
Chapter 29. That speaks about. One person's presumption. One person's. Contempt. In their heart. Becoming a root. That poisons. Many. Among the people of God.
[32:21] You see. That spiritual. Complacency. And carelessness. Is contagious. It's like. The coronavirus. Can't easily. Be constrained. Once there's an outbreak. And so the only way.

He's saying. Is for everyone. To ensure. Their own. And everybody else's. Spiritual hygiene. In life. In the life of the whole church. Or else. He says.
The end can be disastrous. Spiritual disqualification. Again. Verse 15. Defiling. Verse 17. Rejection. Notice. With no possibility.
Of repentance. These are very serious verses. How does that kind of thing happen? How do people. Fall away. From God's grace. Into.
Into bitterness. Into immorality. Into unholiness. Like Esau. Verse 16. Well. Esau's a very good example. That's why he names him. He gave up.
[33:18] His whole. Future inheritance. His whole. Eternal blessing. For a single meal. That is. He allowed. The short term.

Joy. Set before him. The physical attraction. Of this material world. Here and now. To blind him completely. To the only thing. That really matters. Ultimately. The solid joy.
The lasting treasures. Of the eternal kingdom of God. Esau. Is here. As the very antithesis. Of everyone. In chapter 11. Because.
Esau's eyes. Were on the present. Not on the future. Were on the earth. Not on heaven. For Esau. Earthly appetites. Trumped.
Eternal appetites. And friends. That's a very easy thing. For any one of us. To fall prey to. Isn't it? When our eyes are turned away.

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[34:13] From the great resurrection. To come. From the reward of God. To the joys. That are set before our eyes. Day after day after day. In our earthly life. Right now. And when we start to look at these things.

Well your appetites get kindled. Just like looking at a plate of food. When you're hungry. And that's when you begin. To lose your way. To lose heart. To become dispirited.
To become bitter even. In your heart. And you want to give up. In your struggle against sin. You want to satisfy. Those present appetites now.
And maybe it is. For illicit sex. Or for illicit substances. Very often. It's just for. Very respectable. Self-indulgences.
In material things. That nobody else. Thinks anything of. Or maybe it's just. That we want to give up. Facing hostility. Facing scorn. Just take an easier way.
[35:11] Not stand up. Any longer for Jesus. When it's hard to do that. Or it's a temptation. Just to give up on God. Because. Because he hasn't. Given us.

The things that we feel. We have an appetite for now. The relationship that you want. Maybe the child. The family that you want.
The success that you want. The job that you want. The healing. Perhaps. That you want. For yourself. For a loved one. But you see friends.
What he's telling us. In these verses. Is once we start. Down that road. Good. Well look where it ends. Esau's appetite. So captured him. And so led him astray.
That verse 17. Tells us. He passed the point. Of no return. He found no opportunity. He found no opportunity. To repent. He's full of remorse.
[36:06] He wanted the blessing. Of course. But he showed no repentance. He's here. As a vivid. Personal example. Of what we saw. Back in chapter 6. Verses 4 to 6. Of the impossibility.

Of repentance. If you harden the heart. To God's eternal call. Of his kingdom. Having had its blessings. Before you. Having had God's grace. In your life.
And all around you. There is real. Peril. In complacency. In the church of Jesus Christ. In these last days.
He's saying to us. And so we're to see to it. That none of us. Slips away. That way. Like Esau. Unless you're tempted friends.
Don't think for a moment. That any of us can say. But we're New Testament Christians. We're not like Esau. It's different for us. Not so.
[37:02] Well it is so. But not in the way. That perhaps you might like to think. For verse 18. For. And look down to verse 25. Much less. Will we escape.

If we. Reject him. Who warns from heaven. Our God. Is a consuming fire. He says. See this last section. Gives us another. Great motivation.
To endure. Both by great encouragement. But also. By another solemn warning. I mean. You need to be very clear. That. Verses 18. To 29. Are teaching us. About the real privilege.
Of the Christian church. In these last days. And they teach us. That the real Christian life. Is about a great welcome. But also. About a great warning. From heaven.
In these last days. As Christians. We enjoy. Great privileges. Greater privileges. Than in any. Of the former days. That's the whole message. Of this book. But. What he says here.
[38:04] Is that an open entrance. Through the welcome. Of our heavenly mediator. Demands. That we have open ears. To the words. Of the heavenly majesty. The far greater privileges.

That we have. As the church. In these last days. The finished work of Christ. Yes. It means. That we have. Far greater responsibilities. Not to fall short. But to endure.
To the end. There is a great contrast. No doubt about it. Given in verses 18 to 24. Between the gathering. At Mount Sinai. Mediated by Moses. And the gathering.
At Mount Sion. Mediated by Jesus. But it's not. A contrast. Of complete difference. In character. Rather. It's a contrast.
Very clearly. From the lesser thing. To the greater thing. In terms of the awesome. Splendor of the scene. And of the. Awesome significance. Particularly. Of the voice of God. At Sinai.
[39:01] We're told. God spoke in blazing fire. It was awesome. Splendor. Overwhelming. Verse 21. God's voice was terrifying. Even though. It was their redeemer speaking.

The one who had brought them out of Egypt. And the people. Understood. The gravity of it. And the responsibility. To obey. It was so weighty. Even an animal. Couldn't break the command.

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And go and touch. The mountain. On pain of death. But you. He says. In verse 22. The church. In the last days. You have drawn near. To something. Even greater.
Splendor. And with even greater. Significance. To the heavenly Jerusalem. So yes. There is joy. There is great joy. We have a bold. Approach.
To the throne of grace. Because the finished. Perfecting work. Of Jesus. The mediator. Of the new covenant. Has been given. His sprinkled blood. Speaks. Not of vengeance.
[39:55] Like. Abel's blood. Spilt by his brother Cain. Speaks of forgiveness. Wonderful. But it's a big mistake.

To take that as a contrast. Between fear. In the old covenant. And joy. In the absence of fear. In the new covenant. That's the opposite conclusion. To what the writer here draws.
Look at verse 25. See to it. That you do not. Refuse him. Who is speaking now. For if they did not escape. When they refused him. Who warned them then on earth. Much less will we escape.
If we reject him. Who warns from heaven. Do you see? The not. And the but. Contrast. There in verse 18. And verse 22. Is the same. As in verse 26 here.
And it's not only the earth. But also. The heavens. The contrast. Is something. That was just from. Something earthly. And preparatory. Like everything was.
[40:50] In the old covenant. To something that is now. Cosmic. And ultimate. And eternal. So yes. There is. Of course. Greater celebration. We boldly approach.

The throne of grace. But there can be no casualness. No carelessness. And certainly. No contempt. For the voice of God. In all of its last days.
Fullness. We may boldly. Approach the throne of grace. But we must bow in awe. Before the throne of glory. He says. In Jesus Christ.
In God's final word. He has spoken to this world. And by his. Sprinkled blood. He has finished. His work of salvation. He has accomplished it. We have a better word.
Of grace. Than ever there was before. We have a better covenant. We have a better hope. We have a better sacrifice. We have the ultimate revelation. Of the grace. And the glory. Of God.
[41:46] That is the great privilege. Of the church of Jesus Christ. In this New Testament age. But therefore. He is telling us. In verse 25.

Here. We have a far. Far greater responsibility. Not to refuse him. Who's speaking. Not to turn back. From the glorious promise.
In Christ. Not to long. For the easier ways. Of our past life. Again. Not to hanker. After what is immediately. Satisfying.
In this world. Not. To be drawn away. By anything. From loyalty. To Jesus Christ. So be warned. That's what he's saying.
Far greater judgment. Final judgment. Is coming. Verse 27. A shaking. Of all things. Everything. In this passing world. He says. Will be removed. And that means.
[42:41] Including. The hearts of people. Who are fully invested. In this passing world. And not. In the unshakable. Eternal kingdom. Of Christ. He quotes.

The promise. Of that judgment. From the prophet. Haggai. In verse 26. But what he's saying. To us. Is that a warning. To us. Is far. Far clearer. And friends.
What a blessing. That is. Because it's a warning. For our salvation. It was Jesus. Wasn't it. Who talked more. About the coming judgment. Than any other person.
In the whole. New Testament. And it's the privilege. Of us. In the New Testament church. To know with certainty. That it is Jesus. Who will be that judge. That's the gospel.
That Jesus commanded. His apostles. To preach to the world. That's what he says. To the Roman Cornelius. In Acts chapter 10. Jesus. Peter says. Commanded us. To preach to the people. That he. Is the one.
[43:37] Appointed. To judge the living. And the dead. Paul says. To the Athenian philosophers. The day and the hour. Has been set. When he'll judge. By the man he has appointed.

Jesus Christ. And look at verse 27. On that day. All the things made. All the things. That catch our eyes. Now. All the things.
That captivate our hearts. Now. Tempt us away. From the race of faith. All. Will be removed. Nothing visible. Remains. No nation.
No government. No power. No presidents. But no possessions. No property. No positions. That we might have.

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No treasure. At all. That we have cherished. In this life. Nothing. So don't. Ever. Choose these things.
[44:29] Over loyalty. To our Lord Jesus Christ. And his kingdom. He's saying. That's the only thing. That is unshakable. And everlasting. To do that.

Is utter madness. And it is the way. Of disaster. Don't. Refuse. His voice. Calling us. To faith. And obedience. The scholar.
William Lane. Sums it up this way. Failure to listen attentively. To what God is saying. Now. At this present time. Can only be. Catastrophic.
That's what these verses are saying. It's a sober. And a sobering warning. But it's also a wonderful encouragement. Look at verse 28. Because what is unseen.
To the world now. But what is real. What is wonderfully near to us. As Christians. Is. The kingdom. That can never ever be shaken. And even now.
[45:25] We are possessing it. We are drawing near. By faith. To that wonderful reality. Through Jesus Christ. And what we are now. Possessing by faith. On that great day of judgment.

We. Who endure to the end. Shall certainly. Possess by sight. If we keep holding fast. In hope. And fear. That is the promise of God.
If we keep worshipping him. In reverent fear. And awe. In reverent fear. Yes. Because we know judgment is coming. So we never stop. Listening to Jesus.
We never stop. Bowing in awe. To the throne of glory. With open ears. To the word of his majesty. Reverent fear. Is necessary. But also.
He is saying. In resilient hope. Because we never stop. Looking to Jesus. Jesus. And we live. Day by day. Boldly approaching. The throne of grace. Because we know.
[46:20] We also have an open entrance. Through a welcoming mediator. Do you see what he is saying friends. In summary. It is our wonderful privilege.

In these last days. To know. That we are being shaped. Into his pattern. Into the pattern of Christ himself. As sons and daughters of God.
To share in his. Eternal kingdom. Which can never be shaken. And yes. The perils are real. So we need to see to it. That none of us slips back.
But that we all. Persevere. That we all. Hold fast. With real hope. And reverent fear. But looking to Jesus.
And listening to Jesus. Day by day. Until the race is finished. Until the last battle is won. Until that faith. Gives way to sight. Of that glorious future. And so he says.
[47:20] Let us run. With perseverance. The race that is set before us. Looking. To Jesus. The great champion. The perfecter. Of our faith.

That's what it means. To offer God. The worship. That pleases him. And that will preserve us. In eternal life. Forever and ever.
Amen. Let's pray. Gracious God. We thank you. For the wonderful privileges. That we have. Living in these last days. When you have spoken. Your final word. To this world.
And when you have. Already. Through our Lord Jesus. Perfected. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Perfected. Forever. Through his blood. Those whom you.
Are calling. To your eternal home of glory. How we thank you Lord. For the clarity of sight. That you've given us. And therefore the joy.
[48:20] And the hope. That is in our hearts. That we also.

Will not drift back. Not stumble. And choose. Away of this world. Not allow. This world's appetites. To overwhelm us.
But to keep one another. Firmly. Looking for. And living for. The reward. And the rewarder. And the great resurrection. That is to come.
So lift. Our drooping hands. Strengthen. Our weak knees. Make straight paths. For our feet. We pray. So that we might not be lame. And out of joint.
But rather healed. Now and always. For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Let's make there. Let's see.
[49:42] Let's take a look. Let's take a look.

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