

Acceptable Worship Endures

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[0 : 00] We're going to read the whole of Hebrews chapter 12, which of course comes after and really is the climax of the famous chapter 11 about all the great heroes of the faith.

So I'll just read from Hebrews 11 verse 39. All these, that's those that have been mentioned, especially Abraham, Moses, all of these great ones who've gone before.

All these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us, they should not be made perfect.

Therefore, since we're 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 and the perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

[1 : 06] 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 have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

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 is there whom his father does not discipline? If you're left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you're illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we've had earthly fathers who disciplined us and 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.

[2 : 09] But he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant.

But later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore, lift 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 for peace with everyone and for the 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 sexually 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.

For he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. For you have not come or drawn near to 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 made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.

[3 : 29] For they could not endure the order that was given. If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned. Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, I tremble with fear.

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 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 things that are shaken.

That is, things that have been made. In order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

[4 : 52] Thus, let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe. For our God is a consuming fire.

Amen. May God bless this his word to us. Well, if you turn with me to that passage that we read together in Hebrews chapter 12. Which is a chapter all about acceptable worship.

Acceptable worship that endures. And as we come to the end of term, and many will be going on holiday. Myself included. I thought it would be good for us to look at this chapter of Hebrews.

Which is all about what it means to worship God acceptably. That's how it ends. Worshiping God acceptably. With reverence and awe. Verse 28. Let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe.

Says the writer. That's summing up the whole passage. For, he says, our God is a consuming fire. That rather makes us sit up, doesn't it?

[6 : 04] We'd better get our worship right, he's saying. Or else we'll face the fire of God's judgment. God is a consuming fire. Worship, obviously, is a serious matter.

But you will have noticed that you may find it strange that there's nothing in this chapter at all that seems to talk about worship in terms of singing, or of praying, or of the sacraments, or anything else like that at all.

There's no comment on songs, either ancient or modern. There's no comment about tunes, either somber or lively. There's nothing about instruments, classical or funky, or indeed absence of instruments altogether.

Now, for the apostle, the whole reality of worship is not about singing, but it's about struggle.

Struggle against sin. It's not about drum kits. But it is about discipline. The discipline of the Lord. It's not about even song, but it is all about endurance.

[7 : 12] Enduring to the end as followers of Christ. Look at verse 1, which really is parallel to verse 28 with its command. Let us, let us offer acceptable worship, says verse 28.

Verse 1, let us lay aside every sin, every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race set before us.

Looking to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith. Now, you see, this chapter's call to worship is, in fact, a powerful call to Christian people to endure, to persevere, right to the end as faithful Christians.

And not to give up, not to go back to our former way of life. Especially, especially, especially in the face of many temptations that there will be in life to do so.

Now, we all face temptations constantly, don't we, to an easier way. We all are in what verse 4 calls, you see, a struggle against sin.

[8 : 20] We're all in that all the time, aren't we? But, and this is a big issue in the letter to the Hebrews. There are times, aren't there, when there are added pressures of opposition.

Added pressures of outright hostility from outside a hostile culture. But also, often from inside the wider professing church, which sometimes can be even more difficult and more pressurized.

Look at verse 3. It speaks of the weariness that constant hostility engenders. It speaks of the faint-heartedness, do you see, that real insults, that real persecutions can bring.

Think about those people in the church in Kenya that were bombed this morning. Think about our mission partners, David and Julia Rubri, and Joss in Nigeria, where we're constantly hearing about these suicide bombs attacking the churches Sunday by Sunday.

Wouldn't that make you faint-hearted? It would certainly make me very faint-hearted, going out to church on a Sunday morning in Joss, Nigeria. If you look back to chapter 10, at verse 33, you'll see that these Hebrew Christians that the apostle is writing to have faced public reproach.

[9 : 40] They've faced affliction. They've even faced the plundering of their property. Now, we here today haven't experienced quite those things, have we?

Yet, there is growing hostility to the Christian faith in our culture. Yes, there is. And no doubt, it will get worse. We mustn't be naive. And, of course, in recent days, some of us at least have discovered what it's like to be publicly reproached for our church's stand.

And, yes, there have been, actually, those within the professing church seeking to plunder our property. Money that we have given for the work of Christ in this place, being claimed by other people.

So, perhaps we're just beginning to experience a little of some of the things that these Hebrew Christians did experience. And it is easy to feel weary when you face these things.

It's easy, isn't it, to be faint-hearted. And so, the writer writes here because he wants to stiffen our spines, just as Edward has been teaching us from 2 Timothy in the evenings.

[10:52] He wants to put strength, fresh strength, into our wavering hearts. And he has a lot to say to us today, just as he did to these Hebrew Christians all those years ago.

So, I want to look at that message a little more closely this morning. And here's a long chapter. All we can do this morning is try and get the main thrust of it. But let's try and do that under three headings. First of all, the perseverance of the Christian.

Verses 1 and the first half of verse 2. The perseverance of the Christian. Now, oftentimes when this subject comes up, it does so as part of a debate.

And it goes rather like this. Can a real Christian fall away from faith? Whereas if they can, how can we possibly have any real assurance of our salvation?

But then, if a real Christian can't ever fall away, why do we have so many warnings in the Bible? Warning Christians, apparently, not to fall away. It's a conundrum, isn't it? And often that's the debate.

[11:56] Well, the funny thing is that the Bible actually itself never ever approaches things that way. Not at all. It's just not interested ever in sort of abstruse theological debates.

The Bible, refreshingly, is actually interested in real life and real people and real Christians. And this chapter is very simple. It's written to professing Christians in real churches just like us.

And the writer actually has already said, if you look back to chapter 10, verse 21, he has said that these people can have full assurance of faith.

That is, draw near with full assurance of faith, he says there. And yet here, in verse 1 of chapter 12, he simply says, let us run with perseverance, run with endurance the race marked out for us.

It's really the climax, as I said, of chapter 11. At the end of chapter 10, in chapter 10, verse 36, he says, you have need of endurance so that you will receive what is promised.

[13:05] That is, your full salvation, eternal life in the kingdom of God. And he assures them, we are not those, he says. We are not those who shrink back and are destroyed, but we are those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Just like all the people of faith of old that he lays out in chapter 11 as examples. Now, what was it then that marked out these people of faith that we read about in Hebrews chapter 11?

Well, what marked out every single one of them was that they looked forward to the reward, to the reward that there was in Christ.

Hebrews 11, verse 26. Moses, who along with Abraham, dominates the chapter. Moses considered the reproach of Christ far greater than the treasures of Egypt.

Why? Because he was looking forward to the reward. And the end of chapter 11 that we read reminds us that all of them died without yet having received that reward.

[14:09] Why? Because, says verse 40, apart from us, they should not be made perfect. That is what he's saying. We also are part of this same story.

We also are running the same race that they ran. And chapter 12, verse 1 tells us that this crowd of witnesses, this great crowd of witnesses, they show us the way that we are to run our race today.

And we are to run it just exactly as they did. How? Looking to Jesus, says the writer. Looking to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our faith, just as he was the founder and perfecter of their faith.

They all looked forward, didn't they, to the promise of the Savior to come. That's how they endured, by trusting in the promise. And that also, says verse 2, is exactly how we are to endure.

By trusting in the promise. By looking to Jesus. And running the race that is set before us. Notice what the writer is not saying here.

[15:19] He is not saying, look to the example of these heroes of the faith in the past and be inspired by their lives. Try to live like them. No, that's not what he's saying.

No, he is saying, look to the same one to whom they looked. Look to the Savior who you know even better than any of these great saints of old knew.

That's one of the great words of the book of Hebrews, isn't it? Better. Everything. Everything is better for us today as New Testament Christians.

Better than it was for all the saints of old. Not different. Because we have the same hope and the same faith as they did. But we do have it better. Why? Because Jesus Christ has at last come. Because he's finished his work. Because the work of salvation is complete. And so that work in our lives will certainly be brought to completion. To perfect our faith.

[16:20] To bring us that ultimate salvation that was promised. As we run with endurance the race that is marked out for us. The race of faith. Looking to Jesus.

Not just looking to him either as an example. Although he is that. But looking to him as our enabler. As the one through whom our salvation has begun.

He is the founder of it. Says verse 2. And also the one through whom our salvation will be made complete. He is the perfecter.

He begins and ends our great salvation. So how do you endure? You run the race looking to Jesus. The founder and the finisher. And you keep trusting in him to give you the endurance day by day. That you need to run the race. You see if you look just to other Christians.

[17:22] To other believers. You try to just emulate great heroes of a faith. Either the past or the present. Well you'll give up. Because they don't have any power to help you endure.

Actually they might make you despair. Because you realize how unlike them you are. That's the danger isn't it of Christian biographies. There's a great joy in reading Christian biographies. There is inspiration isn't there.

In reading about the lives of the great ones. But there can also be a danger that we are discouraged. Especially if these books are a sort of hagiography. Showing all the wonderful features of these saints.

But nothing of their flaws and their bad points. Personally I love it when I read a book that exposes that somebody is not nearly the man you thought they were. That encourages me far more. Than somebody who seems to be absolutely perfect all the time.

But when you read the story of somebody who is utterly flawed. But who points you constantly to the great savior who saved even a wretch like them.

[18:24] Now there's encouragement. Look to Jesus. Because he has the power to make you endure. But here's a question.

Why does this race have to be an endurance race? Why can't it just be a quick sprint in the Christian life? Why does it have to be so much about perseverance and endurance?

When I was at school. Long, long ago now. I used to run in athletics. And I was quite good. I was the school champion in middle distance running.

800 meters and 1500 meters. My children can't really believe that now. But nevertheless. Once upon a time it was true. But that was my limit. I could not go any further than 1500 meters.

I just didn't have the patience. I could never have been a marathon runner. Not like Mark Campbell who goes off and runs these marathons. I just don't have the patience. I couldn't do that. Why does the Christian life have to be a marathon?

[19:25] Why does it have to be a slog? Why is the New Testament so full of this business of perseverance for the Christian? Well the answer you see lies really here in this passage in verses 2 to 11.

Because it tells us that the way of patient endurance is. And this is our second thing. It is the pattern of the Christ. It's the pattern of the true son of God.

And therefore this way is going to be the pattern for all true sons of God. Verses 2 and 3 if you look at them. They show us the example of Jesus.

Don't they? Christ endured the cross. Says verse 2. Having endured. As verse 3 tells us. Having endured the terrible hostility of sinful people against them.

He endured. Why? Because of the joy set before him. He scorned the shame of this world. Because he knew he would reap the glory of heaven.

[20:28] And he is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. But you see the pattern for Jesus, the true son of God.

Was that the road to glory, the road to exaltation, the road to joy. Was a road of earthly suffering. It was a road of hostility. It was a road that led to death on this earth.

And only that way did his resurrection and ascension to glory come about. And he is our pattern. Says the apostle. He is our example.

Notice that this is crucial. It's not just that Christ is our example. The reality here is something far greater than that. You mustn't miss it. It is that Christ himself is our savior and our sustainer. And Christ himself is shaping us. Now. Into a Christ shaped way of salvation.

[21 : 29] So that we will share a Christ shaped glory to come. We are being saved because we are united to the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore we share in a most intimate way in the glory that is his.

And therefore we share now in a most intimate way in his life and his death. As well as in his resurrection to come.

Look back to chapter 10 verse 22. We must get this clear. Chapter 10 verse 22 of Hebrews tells us that Christ has saved us.

Do you see? He has sprinkled clean water onto our hearts. He has thereby cleansed us. And washed us from all sin. But that's not the end of our salvation is it?

Look at verse 23. We're told to hold fast to our hope. And that's because there's more to come. There's a great day that is drawing near. Says verse 25.

[22 : 31] There's a great day that's drawing near. When at last we will be perfect. We will be like him in every way. And you see everything that is happening in your life now.

As you run the race of faith with endurance. Everything is preparing you. Shaping you. For that coming day of glory. Look back to chapter 12.

That's what verses 5 to 12 are all about. Do you see? It's all about discipling us as sons. Now that word discipline. It has a negative connotation doesn't it?

In our minds. We think about school masters and detention. And all that sort of thing. At least I do. But that's not really what this word means in the Bible. It means teaching.

It means training. It means preparing. Discipling. It means shaping us into the mold of God's son.

[23 : 37] The Lord Jesus Christ. Discipline in the Bible is being shaped to be like Jesus. Jesus. Now back in Hebrews chapter 2. Don't look it up now. But you remember that we're told there that Jesus.

The founder of our salvation. Was made perfect through suffering. We're told that he was made like his brothers in every respect. To win our salvation for us.

Well here in chapter 12 we're being told something different. We're being told that we are now being shaped to be like him. In every respect. Verse 7. You see it's for discipline.

It's for being shaped to be like Jesus. That we have to endure. Because God is treating us like true sons. It's not our self-discipline that's being called for.

Don't make that mistake. Self-discipline is good of course. Something you need to learn. Especially if you're a student or a teenager. Self-discipline is important. But he's not speaking about that here.

[24 : 37] He's speaking about God's discipline. God's shaping of us. God at work in us to bring forth fruitfulness in our lives. Look at verse 11.

He's talking about something he's doing both now and eternally. Something which later, that is eternally, will yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Now sure, verse 11 is absolutely plain, isn't it?

Of course it seems painful at the present. And very often it's very painful. Just as Christ's road was painful. Was agonizing. But it is the only road, the only road, that will ever shape us also to be like Jesus.

To be true sons and not illegitimate fakes. Now isn't that an encouragement to you in your struggles in the Christian life? Isn't that a real encouragement to persevere, to endure when things are tough? Because we recognize that what we're experiencing is the pattern of the life of Jesus Christ. Both personally and also in many of the things that we're facing together as a church fellowship just now.

[25 : 53] It's knowing that, isn't it, that's going to make a real practical difference in our lives. In the very kind of things that verses 12 to 17 speak about. Do you see? He's describing there what this enduring actually looks like in practice.

And he says that you do it just by doing it. You see verses 12 and 13? What is lame will be healed, says the apostle, as you lift drooping hands and knees.

And you keep running, keep on enduring. Now we often think, don't we, that it's not like that. We often think that we'll wait until things are better and wait until things are easier. And then, then I'll be

able to endure much better.

But that's not the way it is in real life or in the Bible. It's the path of dogged, enduring faith that will actually help us and renew us and bring renewed health and strength to our spiritual lives. It's just like any endurance training. It's doing it that gives you the muscles that are tough enough to endure. You don't get those tough muscles first, do you? All of a sudden and then, as if by magic, you become durable.

[27 : 01] The athletes training for the Olympics aren't going to suddenly just become like that at the last minute. It's through that enduring that they'll become athletes who can endure the games.

And just so here, you see, you strive, says verse 14, for peace and holiness. And without that, you'll not see the Lord. That is, you won't enter his kingdom of glory. Now, he's not saying, of course, that you earn these things by your own merits.

Verse 15 is very clear. He's plain. It comes by God's grace, he says. And yet, you obtain that grace by enduring in grace and by keeping the race.

Keep running the race. Now, there's positive encouragement here in these verses to do just that.

But there's also negative warning in verse 15. Negative warning, not to scorn that grace.

Not to allow bitterness to affect your lives. Not to allow that bitterness to affect one another.

Because bitterness, he says, is contagious. How do these things happen that he's speaking about in these verses?

[28 : 10] How do people fall away from God's grace into bitterness, verse 15? Or into sexual immorality? Or into unholiness, verse 16?

Well, Esau has given us the great example. And we've seen Esau recently, haven't we, in our studies in Genesis. Esau gave up his whole long-term inheritance for a single meal.

That is, that he allowed short-term attractions, physical attractions. Things in this material world.

Things that he desired here and now, immediately.

He allowed these things to blind him to what really matters above all. To blind him to the everlasting kingdom of God. To the solid joys, to the lasting treasures of God's covenant promise.

And Esau is held up as the very opposite. The antithesis of every one of the heroes of faith in chapter 11. Because Esau had his eyes on the present and not on the future.

[29 : 15] Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were told they were content, weren't they, to be strangers on this earth. Because they were seeking a better country. A heavenly country. Moses scorned the wealth, the treasures of Egypt now.

Because he was looking for the true reward. Still to come. And all of those who were mocked, who were flogged, who were chained, who were sawn in two.

They all kept faith because they saw what was invisible. They had eyes on the future reality of God's promise. You see, it's when we lose that focus.

It's when we want to have now in our lives. Now the blessings that can only belong to the future and the kingdom of God. That's when we begin to lose heart, isn't it?

That's when we begin to become dispirited and bitter. That's when we want to give up. Give up our struggles against sin. We just want to satisfy our bodily appetites.

[30 : 18] Now. Perhaps for illicit substances or illicit sex. Or maybe just for very respectable self-indulgences in the things of this world.

It's when we drift our eyes from the future that we want to give up. The struggles of facing hostility and of scorn. And just take the easier way and stop witnessing for Christ.

Stop standing for his truth. It's when we want to give up on God bitterly because he hasn't met the needs that we feel we have now.

Maybe for the relationship that we want to have and don't. Or the family that we crave. Or the success in sport or in academia or in business or whatever it is.

Or the job prospect that's frustrated. Or perhaps the healing for yourself or for a loved one that you've prayed for. But you see when you look to Jesus.

[31 : 17] You see that he endured all these things. For the joy that was set before him. And when you remember that even now these painful things that are happening in our lives are leading us in that way of the cross.

So that we might be shaped. Shaped for the same joy as Jesus Christ knows now. Through the great power of God. Then that's what will pick up our weak knees.

That's what will make straight paths for our feet. That's why the greatest thing friends that we can do for one another as Christians. And keep on doing in fact.

Is to keep pointing one another to the future. To the joy that's set before us. To the fruit of righteousness that's everlasting. But which is being forged even now in the fires of affliction. That's why the most important thing you can ever do for a Christian friend or brother or sister. Is to point their eyes once again to the great day of the Lord's coming.

[32 : 24] The great day when in holiness we will at last see the Lord. I love that great hymn that we've sung quite often recently. For all the saints. I love it for that reason.

Because it calls us back to think of all the great saints that we know who have fought the good fight before us. But also it calls us to look forward to the triumph of the great coming day of the Lord. And when the strife is fierce. The battle long. Steals on the ear. The distant triumph song. And hearts are brave again. And arms are strong.

Hallelujah. That's the gospel. And ours. And ours. Our life is. Lived in the pattern of the Christ. Who for the joy set before him endured the cross. Despising its shame. And is now seated at the right hand of God. In the glory everlasting.

[33 : 22] And you see to share in that. Says the apostle. In this last section from verse 18 to 29.

That is the privilege of the church. We are those who have been given even greater privileges than all the saints of old. Through Jesus who is the mediator of the new covenant.

And therefore. In these verses. He reminds us that we have greater responsibilities. Also not to fall short. Not to fail in our great calling to endure.

In order that we also will share in that great kingdom of glory. The privilege of the church. Is to share in that glory. And this last section gives us further motivation.

And both a solemn warning. And a great encouragement. I want us to look at it briefly. See the gospel always is a double-edged sword. Isn't it? That's exactly the language in fact that Hebrew uses.

[34 : 23] In Hebrews chapter 4. It always comes with great encouragement. And with great strengthening. But also at the same time with great warning. It's those necessary negatives.

Isn't it? That gives the sharpness. To the true gospel. It gives its power. Both to bring joy and gladness to some. But also to offense and hatred to others.

It's a savor of life to some. Says Paul. And the stench of death to others. The gospel is a double-edged sword. So John chapter 14 verse 6.

I am the way, the truth and the life. Says Jesus. That's an innocuous and offensive thing to everybody. Isn't it? Nobody dislikes that. But the second half of the verse is the other side.

No one comes to the Father but by me. That is scandalously offensive to many, isn't it? Because it counters all other religious claims.

[35 : 19] But you can't have the one without the other. It's a two-edged sword. And that's what we see here in these verses. 18 to 24 here in chapter 12.

Speak of the great privilege that we have as the New Testament church. Those who have received the new covenant blessings in Christ. We've not come, he says, merely to Mount Sinai with all its awesome splendor.

Where the very voice of God shook the earth. So great was the privilege of God's people then. So weighty the responsibility to hear and to obey God's voice.

That we're told in verse 20. Even if an animal touched the mountain. Because God's command was ignored. It was to be stoned to death.

Such a great privilege to hear God's voice. Such a weighty responsibility to obey. But we, you see, verse 22. We have something vastly more impressive even than that.

[36 : 22] Even than a smoking mountain and the audible voice of God. We have seen, he says, the kingdom of Christ begun. We've seen the door of heaven opened. We have drawn near, he says.

Nearer even than anyone could ever have come in the day before Christ. We've drawn near, he says, to the city of the living God. To the hosts of heavenly glory.

God has now spoken in Christ his final word. His ultimate word. Of grace and of mercy. God has now accomplished in Christ his finished work through him.

Through this sprinkled blood, verse 24. That speaks a better word than the word of Abel. That speaks a word of eternal forgiveness and peace and righteousness. A word that makes his people holy at last.

And fit to stand before him. We have a better word in Christ than any word. That these great saints of old's ever had. Just as this letter keeps reminding us.

[37 : 26] We have a better priesthood. A better hope. A better covenant. That's the great privilege of the church in the New Testament age.

We have received so much more. Because Jesus Christ has come. And because he has made purification for our sins. And because he's finished his work.

But therefore, says verse 25. Therefore we have a far, far greater and not a lesser responsibility. Not to refuse him who is speaking. Do you see? Not to turn back. From this glorious promise of God to us in Christ. Not to long for an easier way.

The way of our past life. Not for turning back. Not for turning aside to more immediately satisfying ways of other things. Not to be cast adrift on things that would cause us to slip away from loyalty to this great saviour.

[38 : 34] No, says the apostle. You have to be warned. As well as encouraged. Don't think that God's judgment is now less of a problem. For New Testament Christians than for the Israelites under Moses.

It's the very opposite. Verse 25. If they didn't escape when they refused him who warned them on earth. How much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven?

You see, it's the New Testament. Not the Old Testament. It's the New Testament that gives far, far greater warnings of the judgment to come. And he says the Lord Jesus himself who speaks far more about that than anybody else in the Bible.

If you look at the apostolic preaching of the gospel in the book of Acts. You'll see that at the center always is the proclamation of the risen Lord Jesus as the one who has authority to judge the whole earth.

Jesus commanded us, said Peter to Cornelius. He commanded us as apostles to testify that he is the one who will be the judge of the living and the dead.

[39 : 44] That's the heart of the New Testament. That's the heart of the New Testament gospel. And it's the great privilege of the church to know the absolute certainty of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and glory.

To shake the heavens and the earth, as verse 26 puts it. And to remove everything that is seen, the things that have been made, says verse 27.

Everything. Everything that so easily catches our eyes now. Everything that can so easily entangle us in sin and tempt us away from running that straight race of faith.

Everything will be destroyed. All of these things will be removed, he says. Nothing that seems so visible and solid and unshakable now.

Nothing of that will remain forever. Not any nation or government. Not any power.

[40 : 50] Not any currency. Whether the dollar or the euro or the pound or anything else. Not any denomination or church grouping. Not any church building.

Not even this one. Beautiful as it is. All these things will be removed. So don't ever choose loyalty to these things over loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what the writer's telling us. It's not only madness. But it's the way of disaster. Because it will all end in the fires of God's coming judgment.

That's a real solemn morning, isn't it? The gospel is a double-edged sword. But look at verse 28.

Because it is also a wonderful encouragement. And I do want to remind us of that before we close. Because though unseen now, he says, we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

[42 : 02] Unlike all of this created order. We are receiving something that cannot ever be shaken. And that will remain solid forever.

For those who trust in this God. So, he says, let us offer to God acceptable worship.

With reverence and awe. What is that acceptable worship? Well, no, he's not talking about singing a bit more reverently or awesomely. No, he's just summing up and saying what he's been saying all the way through this chapter since verse 1.

Let us offer God acceptable worship. In other words, let us keep running with endurance. The race marked out for us.

Let us keep trusting and following and obeying the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us keep fixing our eyes on Jesus. Not on the heroes, past or present.

[43 : 06] Not on ourselves or on our own strength. But on Jesus. The founder and the finisher of our faith. Trusting that he began it.

And he will finish it. It's our wonderful privilege. The privilege of the church. To know. That we are being shaped by his pattern.

The pattern of the Christ. So that we will share in his kingdom. A kingdom that will never be shaken. So let's. Endure.

The perseverance. Of the Christian. Is. The worship. That delights the heart of God. Our Heavenly Father. So let's go on.

Worshipping God. Together. Let's run with endurance. The race set before us. Looking to Jesus. The founder. And the perfecter of our faith. Let's pray.

[44 : 08] Lord how we thank you. That. Your great story. Which began with the saints of old. Is also our story. That you have promised to us.

And even greater promises. Than to them. Of the surety. And certainty. Of your power. To keep us. To shape us.

To be like the Lord Jesus Christ. And to bring us at last. To the kingdom. That can never be shaken. So strengthen. Our.

Weak knees. Make straight paths. For our feet. That what is lame. May not be put out of joint. But rather be healed. And help us to run.

Looking to Jesus. For we ask it. In his name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.