

10 Good Reasons for not Giving Up part 1

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Preacher: Edward Lobb

[0 : 0 0] We come, friends, to our second and last sermon in this little series on Hebrews chapter 12. And I'd be grateful if you'd turn the chapter up with me, please. And if you've got one of the big visitor's Bibles, it's on page 1008 and 9.

So Hebrews chapter 12. Now the whole of the epistle to the Hebrews is written to Christians. And chapter 12 is no exception.

It's all directed towards Christian readers and believers. And I'm conscious that there may be some here this evening who have not yet taken that step of accepting Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

Well, if you're in that position, do listen in carefully. You can do some eavesdropping. Because I guess you're here because you're interested to know what the Gospel is and what Christianity is all about. And therefore to listen to the words of God addressed to believers, I hope will be a real help to you as well as to the rest of us.

Now this chapter 12 is a chapter about perseverance in the Christian life. We looked at the first 13 verses of it last week and we saw that they were about perseverance.

[1 : 0 8] And the rest of the chapter, which we're looking at tonight, is also about perseverance. And it gives us several more compelling reasons for going on with Christ once we have started out with Christ.

However, I want to start this evening with a few brief words about human perseverance in relation to God's ability to keep his people persevering.

When a person keeps on going as a believing active Christian right through to their dying day, is it because they have kept themselves going?

Or is it because God has kept them going? Or is it perhaps 50% the power of God and 50% the power of human perseverance? Well friends, I'm convinced that the Bible's answer is that both elements are involved full strength and simultaneously.

In the New Testament there are many passages that teach us that it is the power of God that keeps Christians going. For example, the one who began a good work in us will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.

[2 : 1 7] Those who belong to Jesus have been chosen to belong, predestined to belong to him from before the foundation of the world. And they are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.

Guarded by the power of God. But equally in the New Testament there are many passages that emphasize the Christian's own responsibility to keep going. And Hebrews 12 is one such passage.

So in verse 1 our author says, Let us run with endurance, the race that is set before us. He's appealing there to our responsibility to take care to do this ourselves.

He doesn't say, let us recline in a limousine and drink champagne because God is driving us to heaven. There's a big responsibility laid upon us. In verse 14 he says, strive for peace, strive for holiness.

He doesn't say, relax folks and God will make you holy and peace loving with no effort on your part. So the New Testament emphasizes equally both God's power to keep us going and our own responsibility to do so.

[3 : 27] And, and this to my mind is the telling point, the New Testament's human authors show not the slightest embarrassment in weaving these two great biblical elements together.

There's never a hint that they feel there's something illogical about emphasizing both God's power to keep Christians and the responsibility of Christians to keep themselves.

The Holy Spirit has taught the human authors of the Bible that both aspects of Christian perseverance are true and they must both be given the strongest emphasis.

So as you and I run this race with perseverance in the phrase of verse 1, and as we lift our drooping hands and strengthen our weak old knees, as verse 12 puts it, the power of God to keep us is at work.

We make the effort and at the same time and even in and through our effort, God is displaying his power. It isn't 50% God's work and 50% ours.

[4 : 25] It's 100% of both. And if we say, but that doesn't really make sense mathematically or logically, we need to accept that God's logic is greater than ours.

So here in Hebrews 12, the author's big practical concern is to persuade his readers not to drop out of the Christian life, not for any reason. So the Roman Empire, this letter probably dates from about 65 AD, perhaps from the reign of Nero.

The Roman Empire, the author is saying, may be persecuting you Hebrew Christians, but don't drop out. And the synagogue and your Jewish families who love you so much and are so unhappy about you leaving them and joining the Christians, they may be begging you to return to Judaism.

But there is eternal salvation only in Christ. To desert him is to forfeit your hope of heaven. But what impresses me is the urgency of this call to stay loyal to Christ.

The author of Hebrews is writing about it as though there is nothing more important. Lose your homes if you must. Lose your position in society if you must.

[5 : 36] Lose your life if push comes to shove. But don't lose your salvation. Lose your salvation. To be with Christ eternally is more important than continuing to live on earth.

The author of Hebrews considers life on earth as less valuable than staying true to Christ. That's why he refers to those Old Testament heroes of faith in chapter 11 verses 35, 6 and 7.

Just glance back there. 11, 35 to 7. They were the ones who were prepared to lose their lives in gruesome ways. Remember the one who was sawn in two. Because they were convinced that it was better to be faithful to God and lose your life than to keep your life and be disloyal to God.

Why? Because in 11, 35 they were convinced that resurrection lay before them. They valued eternal life far more than this life.

And the author of Hebrews is saying to his readers and to us today, be like them. Hold this same perspective on this life in relation to eternal life that they had.

[6 : 41] Keep on going with Christ now. Because only thus will you enjoy eternal life then. Let me ask you just to raise the little finger of one hand if you've ever been tempted to drop out of the Christian faith.

I'm going to show it to everyone. Just raise a little finger. Yes, I can see a few dozen, including my own. This is for us friends, isn't it? I've known quite a number of people during my life who have dropped out of the Christian life.

I guess you have as well. Not because they were being threatened with execution or persecution or prison. But because, well in one or two cases, because they preferred adultery to marriage.

Or they preferred serving self to serving the Lord and the Lord's people. Or even for trivial reasons. Because they didn't like the way the music was done in their church. Or they objected to the Kirk Sessions decision about the use of some fund of money.

Or even because the minister didn't speak to them one Sunday morning when they went out of church and they felt slighted. And they said, I'm not going to go there again. Now such folk have clearly never grasped what was at stake.

[7 : 50] They've never seen that to desert Christ and his people is to forego the hope of heaven. They've treated God and the gospel as though the gospel really were of no importance.

Now to a large extent of course, it's the cultural atmosphere that we live in today that threatens or tempts us to value the gospel so lightly.

Just imagine that the world, in other words human life organized without reference to God. Imagine that the world has a scale of values from 10 to 1 or from 1 to 10. Where 1 is of no importance.

You know these surveys and questionnaires you have to fill in. 1 is of no importance and 10 is of the greatest importance so mark your score. Now the world would give I guess 9 or 10 points to health, happiness, wealth, homes and gardens, food and drink, education for the children, good jobs, security, happy sexual relationships and personal tranquility.

But if you were to ask the world how it rates the gospel and eternal life, I guess the answer would be 1. And because the world is bombarding Christians every day with its values, we tend to listen to it and are molded by it, often much more than we care to acknowledge.

[9 : 16] In great swathes of European and British and American history and culture over the last few centuries, the gospel has been regarded as the great truth that commands public attention, that molds education and legislation and national life.

But now, early in the 21st century, the gospel finds itself in a backwater, even in America, certainly in this country, regarded as a matter of minority interest to just a few people who have nothing better to do with their spare time.

So churchgoers, in the view of the world, are just a minority group pursuing their little interest in a corner, rather like caravanners or dinghy sailors or bird spotters.

Harmless, but a bit dotty. Now we know, don't we, we know that the world regards the gospel and the church like that. And the world scale of values, and here's the problem, the world scale of values can seep into our hearts and can cause us to begin to think that it might not matter very much if we were to let go of the gospel and the Lord Jesus.

Let me read you some very sobering reflections from a man called David Wells, who is a theological professor working in North America. And this book, called God in the Wasteland, was published in 1994.

[10 : 41] I'd like to read the first paragraph or so from a passage entitled, The Weightlessness of God. It is one of the defining marks of our time that God is now weightless.

I do not mean by this that he is ethereal, but rather that he has become unimportant. He rests upon the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable.

He has lost his saliency for human life. Those who assure the pollsters of their belief in God's existence may nonetheless consider him less interesting than television, his commands less authoritative than their appetites for affluence and influence, his judgment no more awe-inspiring than the evening news, and his truth less compelling than the advertiser's sweet fog of flattery and lies.

That is weightlessness. It is a condition we have assigned him after having nudged him out to the periphery of our secularized life.

His truth is no longer welcome in our public discourse. The engine of modernity rumbles on, and he is but a speck in its path. Few would deny that this is the case in our modernized society.

[12 : 02] It is less clear to many that it may also be the case, albeit in less blatant and obvious ways, in the church. It means, friend, if David Wells is right in that quotation, it means that you and I are in danger.

If God has become weightless, in your estimation or in mine, this could be the last time that we come to church. Next Sunday, we might prefer to go out for a walk, or a round of golf, or just have a lazy morning in bed with the Sunday papers and an extra slice of toast and marmalade.

It would appear not to matter. Now, the author of Hebrews is determined to persuade us that to forsake Christ is to forsake salvation. But are we open to his persuasion?

Let's look at chapter 12 now. Our passage for this evening is verses 14 to 29, but let's just remind ourselves very briefly of the earlier part of the chapter which we looked at last Sunday evening.

The metaphor that our writer uses in verses 1 to 13 is the metaphor of the race. Verse 1, Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

[13 : 18] That means run it with perseverance rather than giving it up and dropping out. And we're still running this race, still using that metaphor in verses 12 and 13. So he's saying to us, Don't say my arms are too feeble and my knees are too weak to keep going.

The author is encouraging us to keep going despite the fact that we're weak. Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees, he says. How? Well, not by sheer willpower and gritty effort alone, but by looking in three different directions.

First, verse 1, at that great cloud of witnesses, those Old Testament believers who ran their race to its conclusion. And the author is saying, They did it in their day, so we can in ours.

And some of them suffered terribly, and yet they kept going. So there's the first way to look. Secondly, in verses 2 and 3, by looking at Jesus, who persevered despite having to go to the worst thing of all, which was the cross.

And he didn't give up, even when faced with that level of opposition. And then thirdly, verses 4 to 11, by remembering God the Father himself, and the gracious and positive parts that sufferings and hardships play in our lives.

[14 : 31] That he allows them to be used for our discipline. He gives them to us for our good, because he loves us, and is treating us as true children. Therefore, the discipline and the sufferings that we all have to go through are used by him to mold us, to become more like Christ, so that we should share the family likeness with him as our elder brother.

So as we look at Old Testament believers, and at Jesus, and at God as our loving Father, all three give us heartening courage to keep on going.

Now, verses 14 to 29 are taking us on in exactly the same direction. The author is still seeking to persuade us to keep persevering. He leaves the metaphor of the race behind, at verse 14, and as he continues to argue his point, he draws on a number of rich Old Testament passages, so as to impress upon us the danger and awfulness of deserting the Lord Jesus.

And I'd like to look at the passage in three sections. First, verses 14 to 17, the perils of becoming defiled. Then second, verses 18 to 25, the privilege of belonging to Mount Zion.

And thirdly, verses 26 to 29, the power of the day of judgment. So first, to keep us persevering, our author in verses 14 to 17 asks us to reflect on the perils of becoming defiled.

[15 : 59] Now, there's an important feature of verses 14 to 17, which is not well brought out, in fact, not brought out at all in our English translations because of the way that our language is structured.

But it's as plain as a pike staff in the original Greek. And that is that these verses are not addressed just to separate individuals, but to the Christian community as a corporate body, as a whole.

Look with me at verse 14, and I think you'll soon see what I mean. The verse begins with strive for peace. Now, in English, you can't tell whether that verb, that imperative verb strive, is plural or singular.

You'd use the same verb whether you were speaking to one person or to a hundred people. But in Greek, that is a plural verb. So he's saying, you Christians all together strive for peace.

It's the same in verses 15 and 16. See to it, in verse 15, is again plural verb. All of you together, see to it. And again in verse 16, together see to it that no one is sexually immoral.

[17 : 07] Now the force of that plural verb, or those plural verbs, is clear. The author is not just saying that each individual Christian is responsible for his or her own perseverance as a believer.

He is saying that the Christians together, the church, has a corporate responsibility to keep one another persevering. And it's easy to miss this element because we live in a culture where everything is tailored these days to the individual.

But this in Hebrews 12 is a corporate responsibility. So what is being said here to churches, to bodies of Christians like the fellowship of St. George's Tron?

Well there are two basic commands in verse 14. Strive for peace and strive for holiness. Peaceful, peaceable relationships within the brotherhood are essential because Christ died to reconcile us to each other.

And holiness, godly life within the fellowship is essential because, as verse 14 puts it, without holiness no one will see the Lord. In other words, no one will go to heaven without it.

[18 : 17] Therefore, anything that threatens and endangers our corporate holiness may result in a whole group of us not persevering with Christ. The danger is highlighted in verse 15.

See to it, he says, 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.

Now this root of bitterness is an interesting and striking little phrase. It's an image taken from the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 29. And in Deuteronomy 29, the root of bitterness refers to any personal sin against God which contaminates the whole community.

So it's rather like a poisonous plant that spreads around the garden or the farm and rots the whole thing up. When we moved to our house in North Ayrshire a few months ago, we have two or three little fields at the back of the house and I noticed that in one of our fields there was a lot of ragwort.

And you know what ragwort is? It's an attractive looking yellow weed but it's deadly poisonous to horses and cattle. And I've got a problem on my hands. I've got to get rid of it before my neighbours, the farmers, start speaking to me about it I think.

[19 : 29] Now our author in Hebrews is saying dig out, get rid of the bitter roots from your fellowship if there are any growing there because they may defile many people.

They may cause many people to miss the grace of God and not come in the end to heaven. So the bitter roots can cause whole groups of people to stop running the race and persevering.

And two such bitter roots, two such personal sins that can contaminate the whole community are instanced in verse 16. Sexual immorality first and then unholiness like that of Esau.

And let's spend a minute or two on each of these bitter roots which can contaminate the community. First, sexual immorality. Now in our modern very individual culture many people like to think prefer to think that sexual immorality is purely a private matter a private and personal matter that it affects no one but the parties immediately concerned.

So if Mrs. Brown commits adultery with Mr. Black no one need be concerned except Mr. and Mrs. Brown and Mr. and Mrs. Black and this view of sexual immorality can so easily creep into the thinking of churches and Christians.

[20 : 50] I remember being astonished a number of years ago when I was on a conference for clergy down in England and on this clergy conference I heard a senior rector from the Anglican Church a man in his 50s say that what his curate his assistant minister did behind closed doors after working hours in matters of sexual behaviour didn't concern him at all it was private it was none of the rector's business can you believe that?

I found it almost impossible to believe when I heard it Hebrews 12 16 is making quite the opposite point have a look at the words with me again see to it you corporate body of Christians that no one is sexually immoral so this verse is saying that we must lovingly take responsibility for each other in these matters so for example friends if I were to start an adulterous relationship perish the thought but if I were to it means that some of you should immediately march round to my door and say to me Edward what do you think you're doing?

and if I were to bristle up and say well go away it's none of your business it's private you would reply it certainly is our business it's not private what you're doing is damaging and contaminating to the Lord's people you can't contain the evil of it or pretend that you can contain the evil of it within your own life and your own four walls and think of what the consequences of such sexual immorality would be some people would drop out of the race and stop serving Christ they would say well if that's Christianity I can do without Christianity so my sexual immorality would have the effect of pushing some people out of the church and out of heaven that's how serious it is if a Christian behaves like that it's a root of bitterness which causes trouble and defiles many in other words besmirches destroys their holiness so that in the end they will not see the Lord sexual immorality if we commit it may end up excluding other people from heaven then the second bitter root mentioned here is unholiness like that of Esau and the particular part of Esau's life that the author has in mind here is the story of when he came in famished and hungry at the end of a day's hunting and he persuaded Jacob to sell him his birthright sorry the other way around he offered Jacob his birthright in exchange for a mess of red lentil stew remember the story now when we read the account of Jacob and Esau in Genesis we may feel that Esau was a rather likable fellow who was deceived by his scheming and nasty brother Jacob and at one level that is what is going on in the story but that's not the point of these two verses in Hebrews 12 what the author of Hebrews has in mind is the great promise made by God to Abraham and Isaac that they would be the founding fathers of God's special selected nation through whom of course eventually blessing would come to the Gentiles now Jacob knew about that promise this is the point of the Hebrews 12 thing he knew about the promise and he wanted to be part of it

Esau knew about the promise as well but it was so unimportant to him that he was prepared to sell his share in the promise to Jacob for a single meal because he was hungry he knew about God's promise but he treated it with contempt now that same kind of bitter root can lurk in a Christian fellowship too so there can be people in some churches who come to church regularly they're at all the main meetings but without valuing God's promises of heaven and salvation and suddenly a moment can arrive in that individual's life as it did in Esau's life suddenly when there is a choice between the promises of God for the future and the satisfaction of some more pressing need in the present and it's the present satisfaction that wins the day it may not be something quite as trivial as a single meal but it will certainly be trivial by God's scale of values and if one person behaves like Esau in that way it can affect others that's the point it can defile many think of

Sunday morning or Sunday evening in church where's Frieda Higgins somebody says oh somebody else says I saw her in the street the other day and she told me she's given up church and Bible reading she says she'll not bother anymore she'd rather spend her time now in the allotment and visiting her grandchildren on a Sunday so the present satisfaction proves more important to her than the great future promise of heaven and why is that a bitter root that can spread and defile many because others hear about it and they say well if Frieda Higgins can behave like that so can we so the godlessness of one person occasions the downfall of others and what's the message of verse 16 take responsibility for one another see to it that you don't let each other value God's promises so lightly so there's the first section if we reflect on the perils of becoming defiled we shall be given strength to keep going to persevere now second our author teaches us to reflect on the privilege of belonging to Mount Zion and this is the subject of verses 18 to 25 or thereabouts now just in case a few in the back row are nodding and putting up the zeds let me draw you to draw you to order by asking a question or two and I want one or two to sing out the answers from the congregation ok the first ones are simple ones first question in verse 18 which is the mountain mentioned

[26 : 56] Sinai thank you very much second question still fairly simple who was at Mount Sinai in the story of verses 18 to 21 who was there Moses and the Israelites thank you very much Moses and the whole people of Israel who'd escaped third question slightly harder one in verses 18 to 21 what kind of experience would you say is being described would you call it a mountaintop experience an experience of holiday festivity Sunday school picnic what's the mood of verses 18 to 21 would you say one or two adjectives perhaps I didn't quite hear sorry frightening frightening thank you yes any others enlightening was that enlightening enlightening thank you very much it certainly was that too but it was pretty terrifying and gloomy wasn't it and the author of Hebrews means us to feel the terrifying nature of the whole thing look at the images that he heaps up here look at the nouns fire darkness gloom tempest trumpet blast unbearable words even Moses the great Moses being overcome in verse 21 with terror and trembling now do you think it was a privilege to belong to that community under the leadership of Moses it was wasn't it an unspeakably great privilege think of it to be part of

God's own people the chosen race to be one of that great company who had come through the Red Sea unscathed who turned round and saw the waters of the Red Sea enclosing the Egyptian army and bringing them to judgment and then to come with Moses to the foot of Mount Sinai and to receive the law the law of God the wonderful instruction about how to live a life pleasing to God instructions which began to unfold the gospel as well as they described the sacrificial lamb and the priesthood and the tabernacle all of which were descriptions of the role Jesus would fulfil when he later came to bring real salvation so it was a glorious privilege to belong to this people through whom salvation would later come to the world but says the author of our letter you Hebrews the ones he's writing to you Hebrews who have come to Christ you're not Mount Sinai people that's not the mountain to which you've drawn near you're not among the company that came to that mountain the mountain shrouded with terror and fear you have come verse 21 sorry verse 22 to something far better to Mount Zion he's not talking about the earthly Jerusalem but the heavenly Jerusalem and it is characterized by well just run your eye down verses 22 3 and 4 characterized by innumerable angels angels in festal gathering the assembly of the firstborn whose names are enrolled in heaven 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 his blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel so the darkness and terror of Mount Sinai are replaced by the joy of this great heavenly city whose members enjoy eternal membership not because they've earned it but because Christ has shed his blood for them the blood of Abel in verse 24 that could only cry to God for vengeance the blood of Christ speaks a better word than vengeance it speaks forgiveness so what our author is saying through this section is he's saying that it was an enormous privilege to belong to the people of Israel in Old Testament times but it is a far greater privilege to belong to the church of Jesus Christ the fellowship of the heavenly Jerusalem look at the tense of the verbs in verses 22 and 23 he's not saying to Christians you will come to the heavenly Jerusalem and to God he's saying you have come your membership of heaven is already operative the privileges of belonging to thousands upon thousands of angels and the church of the firstborn are yours already and yet you're thinking of deserting Christ with all that so if Frida Higgins leaves the heavenly Jerusalem and the church of the firstborn in favor of her allotment and her grandchildren is she not a great fool and look at verse 25 see to it that you do not refuse him who speaks it's God who speaks to turn aside from Christ and his church is to refuse the God who speaks to us it is to say to God well you may have provided a very great salvation in Christ but I don't care for it anymore you may be speaking to me but I'm going to shut my ears to your voice

I have other things to attend to but why should we listen to him well it's there in the second half of verse 25 if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth how much less will we if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven God warned the Old Testament Jews on earth at Sinai and as we know from the story of the wilderness wanderings many of them refused his voice and they didn't escape his judgment as Paul puts it so sadly in 1 Corinthians 10 their bodies were scattered across the desert out of all that great company you know how many reached the promised land in the end two Caleb and Joshua that's all and the force of verse 25 is that if an earthly warning led to such devastation how much less will we escape in our day if we turn away from the voice that warns us from heaven it is God who commands us from heaven to persevere with Christ do we dare refuse him to refuse him surely is to take the highway to perdition well now thirdly our author bids us to reflect upon the power of the day of judgment as a further incentive to persevere with Christ so let's look here at verses 26 and 27 if the contrast in verses 18 to 24 is the contrast between Sinai and the heavenly

Jerusalem the contrast in verses 26 and 7 is a little bit different it's the contrast between Sinai and the final day of judgment and this contrast turns upon the earthquake verses 18 to 21 speak of fire and gloom and tempest but not earthquake but verse 26 says at that time in other words of the giving of the law at Sinai God's voice shook the earth and that's borne out by the record itself in Exodus 19 Exodus 19 18 the whole mountain trembled violently just before God spoke to Moses and that earthquake that happened at Sinai obviously sank deep into the consciousness and memory of the Jewish people it emerges for example in Psalm 68 the earth trembled at the presence of God Sinai trembled at the presence of the God of Israel and the author of Hebrews is saying to these Jewish Christians who knew their

Old Testaments well that earthquake at Sinai you know all about it it left a deep and traumatic mark upon Jewish history and Jewish consciousness but the time is coming when God will shake not just an earthly mountain but the whole cosmos the heavens now friends let me ask you do you believe that do you believe it's true I do for the simple reason that in verse 26 we read that God has promised it we believe that the great day of judgment is coming not because the astronomers predict it well how could they but because God has promised it and God keeps his promises and what will happen on that day well verse 27 tells us all that can be shaken will be removed that is the things that have been made the created order and we remember just over four years ago the destruction of New York's twin towers that event made the world gasp with fear and horror but what is being spoken of here is the removal of everything created the whole of

[36 : 10] New York City and London and Rome and St. Petersburg and Glasgow everything created the Grampian mountains the Rockies the Pacific Ocean the plains of Africa the ice caps the deserts all gone nothing will remain except verse 28 the kingdom that cannot be shaken which means Christ's kingdom and all who belong to it and who are the ones who belong to it it's the ones who persevere how do we recognize them verse 28 they are the grateful ones the ones who are grateful for the gospel those who worship God acceptably with reverence and awe they stand in awe of him they live their lives in awe of his words they take his words with deep seriousness God is not weightless to them they know that he is a consuming fire who rescues those who trust in Christ but must turn away from the kingdom those who refuse to listen to him so friends let's make sure that we persevere with

Christ and his people right to the very end there are bound to be times when we especially if we know each other and we care about each other we look at one another and we see a brother or sister stumbling and struggling to go on let's at that time lovingly give them a helping hand just for the moment turn and look at the person sitting next to you is that a lovely sight it is in some cases it may not be in every case don't look at the floor just look into their eyes for a moment you may know that person well and you may not but that person sitting next to you is your responsibility your lovely responsibility and therefore to help him or her to persevere with the Lord Jesus is the great thing so when that person begins to sink under the waves of life or the waves of whatever it is lovingly pull them back to the surface again and tell them that there is nothing half so good as belonging to Christ and being a Christian there is a kingdom that cannot be shaken that will remain when everything else has gone so wouldn't it be wonderful if every person who is here in this church this evening were to be in the end a member of the unshakable kingdom let's bow our heads and we'll pray our dear father we thank you for reminding us indeed that you are a consuming fire and that our role our position is to be grateful deeply grateful that we're able to receive this kingdom that cannot be shaken when all else in the end will perish and disappear and we ask you therefore dear father to look with great loving mercy upon each of us because each of us knows and confesses now our frailty and our fearfulness and the times when we don't feel we love you very much and therefore we pray that you will lovingly take hold of each of us and keep us going by your grace and that you will help us too to take loving responsibility for one another and pull each other up and pull each other along when others are flagging so help us to persevere and bring us all we do pray dear father with great joy in the end to that wonderful kingdom that Christ has won for us at such great cost and we ask it in Jesus name

Amen