

The Means of Endurance

By Jess Arnds

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Hebrews 12:1-2
Preached on: Sunday, November 5, 2017

Providence Church
2146 Buford Hwy
Buford Hwy, Duluth, GA 30097

Website: www.providenceduluth.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/providencechurch

Good morning. Before we get into the preaching of the word, I have a couple of corrections to make in the bulletin. It says on Friday the men's study is at 7 PM. It's definitely not at 7 PM but I'll need to get back with you as to the exact time. It's usually 6:30. I don't know how that got switched but 6:30 on Friday. The other thing is it says that the Lord's Supper is today. That is next week and, Lord willing, that is the only, those are the only corrections. We will get those sorts of things fixed, I promise you. And our slides, we're going to figure these things out so thank you for bearing with us, with me specifically.

Let's open the word of God to the book of Hebrews 12 and we're going to read verses 1 and 2.

1 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, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and 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.

Let's pray.

Father, I pray for strength for us all to hear your word, that the things that we need to be corrected on, encouraged in, and strengthened in, Lord, that those things would minister to our hearts, that however you have intended this passage to be taken, that that's how we would take it and that that's what we would believe. And Father, that your Spirit, your Holy Spirit, would take the word preached and heard and would apply it specifically to each of us that you would be glorified in this body and lifted up. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Just as a review of last week, we spent time examining this passage and specifically focused on the need for endurance. The structure of this passage focuses its attention on the commands to let us run with endurance. What are we to run? The race that is set before us. It is laid out in front of us. This race is the race of faith. To run the race is to have faith. To win the race is simply to finish, to run to the end, to hold firm to your faith

until you die or until Christ comes again. That's what it means to win this race, to finish this race, to run it with endurance. This running with endurance is modified by three participles in this passage, three means of endurance, three ways that you do this. The first is in verse 1, it says having "so great a cloud of witnesses." The second is "laying aside every weight, and sin." And the third means of endurance, the third way we do this is that we look to Jesus, "looking to Jesus." So three means of endurance: listening to the witnesses; laying aside every hindrance; and looking to Jesus. This is how you do it.

As we said last week, endurance is a major theme of the New Testament. There are 11 different Greek words that are translated "endurance" in the New Testament in the ESV. The most common is the verb that we have in this, is the word in this passage, hypomone. The Greek word means literally "to remain under," has the idea of holding out in the face of difficulty. The Greek lexicon, my favorite Greek lexicon defines it this way: it's the capacity to hold out or to bear up in the face of difficulty, and it is translated patience, endurance, fortitude, steadfastness, perseverance. It's the act or state of patient waiting for someone or something and it carries with it the idea of expectation and includes active and energetic resistance to hostile power. The Septuagint which the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, it was translated into Greek before the New Testament was written, and that translation, that Greek translation of the Old Testament is called the Septuagint. So this word, hypomone, is the word that they used often to translate the idea "to wait upon God." In the secular Greek sense, it was just this idea of by your own strength resisting hostile forces, but the biblical sense is it never draws it from your own strength. It is dependent upon the strength of God. Lamentations 3:25 is an example of where this is used, "The LORD is good to those who wait for him." Hypomone, those who endure, persevere in waiting for God. The person who seeks him, it is good that he waits silently for the salvation of the Lord.

So as you see the study of endurance in Scripture, when you look especially in the New Testament, it conveys a sense of urgency. It's not just endurance in general. It's not just an endurance, it's not the idea of endurance as a disconnected character quality. Scripture doesn't just say, "Hey, it's good to be the kind of person that sticks to things," although that is a good thing, but in the New Testament, there is a sense of urgency to it. Endurance, and you'll see this over and over, endurance in the faith is the focus. Holding onto your faith. Your faith, what does it mean to be saved? How are you saved? It is by grace through faith. Faith in God. Believing God. Not faith in general but faith in Jesus Christ. Believing what God has promised through him. That is what it means to be saved and you must believe that firm to the end.

God saves those who believe. He ensures that his elect will believe until the end. Jesus said that all who come to him, he will not cast out. He said that he will lose none of his elect. Those that have believed truly believed, will not fall away. Paul said that nothing can separate the believer from the love of God. But in contrast to that, look at how Jesus speaks of this life of faith in Luke 8:15, the parable of the soils. The only good soil on which the seed fell was "those who, hearing the word," of God, "hold fast to it in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience," with endurance, that's the same word, hypomone. The active endurance in the faith, in the word of God. Jesus said many

times that you are to let his word remain in you, abide in you, abide in my love, he says in John 15.

In Mark 13 he says this, Jesus talking to his disciples about the signs of the age, there will be great hardships and all kinds of persecution and he says in verse 12 of chapter 13, "brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved." By the way, just because someone hates you doesn't mean you did anything wrong.

Matthew 10:22, "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved." Matthew 24:9-13, "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."

Paul and Peter both put great emphasis upon this idea of endurance. Peter used it in 1 Peter 2:20 to encourage endurance through unjust suffering, specifically speaking of slaves who were mistreated by their masters, and he says to them, "Make sure if you're mistreated it's for doing good, not for doing evil. Endure through that. This is what you are called to," he says in 1 Peter 2:20. To this you were called, to endure unjust suffering.

Look at what Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:11, "It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him," that is Christ, "we will also live with Him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." And John used it in Revelation many times, the patient endurance that is in Christ Jesus. This is the call to the endurance of the saints. He praises a couple of the churches there for their patient endurance through suffering.

So we see that it is a major theme in Scripture and we also saw last week that Hebrews, the book of Hebrews is one long call to endurance. The whole book. There is a lot of theology in the book of Hebrews. There is a lot of comparison of Jesus to the old covenant, how he is superior, but this is not some ivory tower theology lecture. He's not just saying, "Hey, here are some interesting facts about Jesus that you should log away for an interesting stimulating conversation later." The reason he goes through 10 chapters showing that Jesus is superior to the old covenant law is because those people that he was writing to were Jewish believers undergoing persecution and hardship for their faith and they were tempted to go back to the old covenant. They were tempted to go back to the old covenant law, to reject Jesus, and so the writer of Hebrews goes about laying a case that this is not a good idea. Don't go back. Why? First, because it's wrong. Jesus is superior in every way to the Old Testament, to the old covenant. He is a superior messenger. The angels were great messengers, as Ted read in Hebrews 1, they delivered the law. They were good messengers, Jesus is far superior. He is above the angels. The point of that is chapter 2, listen to him. Listen. Listen to him. Pay closer attention to him so that you do not drift away from what Jesus said.

He goes on and he says he's a better servant than Moses. He's a better priest than Aaron and every other priest that ever lived, every high priest that ever lived. Jesus is superior and he is better than every sacrifice that was ever sacrificed. And not only was he better, the old covenant law could not purify you from sin. All it was, was a constant reminder of your sin. That's what law is, a constant reminder of your sin. But Christ, he actually purified you. His sacrifice actually atoned for your sins, all of them. One sacrifice for all time. No amount of works, no amount of rituals, no amount of religious duties could do that, but Christ did it by one sacrifice, one perfect life, and it was done. There is now no more sacrifices for sin, no more need to make sacrifices for sin. When you sin, you don't need to make up for it by doing good deeds to pay for it, to overcome it. Christ has removed that.

So that is the case that the author is making and he says not only should you not go back to the Old Testament because it can't save you, but Christ is the only one who can save you, not only that, he says that if you harden your hearts against this great salvation, the judgment for rejecting Jesus will be far greater than rejecting even the old covenant. In the old covenant, rejecting God, rejecting the law resulted in severe punishment, death by stoning, but to reject Christ will be a far greater offense. So he says take care that you are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Do not disobey the command to follow Jesus firm to the end.

So back to Hebrews 12. I want to walk, just give an overview of this specific passage and then I want to show you more specifically what Christ has done for you, that we would be drawn to him, that we would hold fast to him. So back to Hebrews 12:1 and 2. He says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses." These witnesses, he just got done talking about them in Chapter 11. All of the Old Testament saints who were commended for their faith, they were saved because of their faith in God. And I want to highlight specifically two of them: I want to highlight Abraham and Moses.

Back in chapter 11 it says this, verse 8, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going." He had never seen it, guys. He had never seen the promise. He had never seen the Promised Land. God promised it to him. He just believed him and therefore he obeyed the command to go. He went out to a place to receive as an inheritance.

Verse 9, "By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise." Why would he do this? You see, he went and lived in a Promised Land. This land was promised to him, but he lived there like a migrant worker, like a sojourner. He went camping in the Promised Land for the rest of his life, living there like it didn't belong to him because at that time, it didn't fully belong to him. It had been promised but it didn't fully belong to him. Why would he go and do that? What did he have to gain from that? He left his homeland. He left the comforts. He went from the city of Ur, which was in that time a big-time city where his family was from, and they packed up and went from basically near Baghdad all

the way to the desert regions of Israel, the arid regions, the southern end of Israel. Why would he do that? Verse 10 it says this, "he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." That's faith. He believed that if he followed God he would have a future city, that he would gain a reward from God.

Look now at verse 13, "These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city." By the way, this better country is not America, it's a heavenly country. This is the same thing that has been promised to us.

Look what more it says about Abraham in verse 17, it says, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, 'Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.'" Okay, so God had promised Abraham all of these things and that promise was going to be fulfilled through Isaac and then God told him, "Okay, go and sacrifice Isaac." His only son. The son of the promise. He had other sons, but this was the son of the promise.

Look at what his faith led him to do, verse 19, "He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back." He based all of his reasoning on God's promises. He based all of his logic on God's promise. The premise for all of his logic and all of his reasoning, the premise was God's promises. That was his starting point for his decisions and from that he reasoned. "Well, God made a promise through him. God can't lie. So God is going to do something because Isaac can't be dead and God still fulfill his promise, therefore God must have a plan to raise him from the dead." That's faith. That's faith working it out in your circumstance, in your reason, according to God's commands and God's promises.

Jump down now. So that's the first example. That's the first witness, one of many. The second example that I want to highlight is Moses in verse 23, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin." Think about what he gave up, the son of Pharaoh's daughter. That was the most powerful, the richest country in the world at that time, at least in their area. In that region, Egypt was the big dog, and if you were in Pharaoh's family, you had all the wealth, all the power, all the pleasure that you could ask for. Why would he give that up? Why would he deny himself to be mistreated with the people of God, than to live a life full of pleasure, sinful pleasure?

Why? Verse 26, "He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward." Looking to the reward. That's faith. A reward that you've never seen. A reward that has only been promised. This lines up exactly with what Paul says in Philippians 3, the surpassing value of Christ is worth the loss of all things; that to know him is worth the loss of all things. When you come to faith, that is what you are acknowledging, that the reward that is offered through Christ is greater than the rewards of sin. You're acknowledging that the homeland that you seek is greater than this one. That's what it means to believe God. It's not only that your sins are forgiven through Christ, but that you have great reward in him.

You see, this is the amazing thing: though we sin constantly, we are corrupted by sin at every level from our motives to our thoughts, our desires, and even when we intend to do good, they are filthy rags, we are willful participants and slaves of our own desires, and yet by the sacrifice of Christ, his death, his once for all death for you, his atonement for your sin, you're not just cleansed, you're not just forgiven, you don't just avoid judgment, but now you are made an heir of the promise. You are made joint heirs with Christ. We are seated with him. It says that we will reign with him in glory; that everything Christ inherits he gives to us. What will he inherit? What will he inherit? The universe, and he has made us joint heirs with him.

We will be with Christ. There will be no suffering, no death, and we're not just going to float on a cloud in some ethereal, you know, ambient hymns being played, it's going to be awesome. We are going to feel great all the time. We're going to have perfect relationships with one another and we are going to be active in service for the Lord and we don't know what that's going to look like but we will worship him and we will serve our King. There is some indication that there may even be nations on the new heavens and the new earth. We will be doing something, and it will be great with the redeemed. And all the projects we work on, there won't be any missed connections and typos and weeds. It will be effective.

I mean, this is the reward that we are looking to. By faith we see that. By faith we seek that. By faith we deny ourselves today that we may be rewarded in the future, and that future is not that far away. Paul says in Romans 8, this light momentary affliction is creating for us an eternal way to glory, and that is not worth being compared to the glory that will be revealed in us. It's not worth being compared. Okay, this isn't coming from a guy who had it easy. He was stoned a couple of times, whipped, flogged, slandered, put in prison, shipwrecked all for the cause of Christ. He says, "I endure all things for the sake of the elect." This is the guy that says this light momentary affliction is not worth being compared to what we will have. So no matter what you're going through, that when we get to the end, you're going to look back and say, "Everything I went through in this life was worth it to have Christ and that reward." No matter what you went through: marital struggles; conflict in the relationships that you endured; physical pain, suffering, death; the loss of everything. You will count it worth it.

We believe that by faith. It's faith in that that enables us to endure, to deny ourselves, to follow Christ, to look like a fool in the eyes of the world because these people are fools,

Hebrews 11. Paul says if we have hope in Christ, this is 1 Corinthians 15, I think it is. If we have hoped in Christ for this life only, we are fools. We are most to be pitied. If our hope in Christ is only in this life, then we are the most pitiful creatures on the planet. But there will be a resurrection and that is the hope.

So these are the witnesses that we are surrounded by. It's so great a cloud of witnesses. There are so many people like this throughout history that it's like a dense cloud surrounding us, that if you look for it you can't miss it. And the way that the Greek text is laid out here, it puts an emphasis on the fact that it is so great. Since we have a cloud of witnesses that is so great, let us lay aside every weight of sin, every weight and sin which clings so closely. So we talked some about the cloud of witnesses, so listen to those witnesses. They cry out concerning the faithfulness of God. They cry out to you to continue in the faith. They cry out to you that it is possible to endure. These witnesses, we are surrounded by them. Listen to them.

You know, there are a couple other things regarding the cloud of witnesses that I want to mention and that is it is this idea that if you want to endure, look to examples of endurance. Pay attention to examples and listen to them. Later in Hebrews, chapter 13, remember your leaders. Chapter 13, verse 7, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith." The people that you know who are faithfully doing this, consider the outcome of their way of life. What is the outcome? It's those rewards. Imitate their faith. You have strong examples, imitate them. If you want to endure, imitate them. There are many, Fox's Book of Martyrs, many examples through history. Okay, so listen to those witnesses.

The second means of endurance is to lay aside every hindrance. When it says, "let us also lay aside," it's actually a participle, a present participle. It says laying aside so it's this idea of continually laying aside the hindrances. Every weight, first of all. It's excess baggage, stuff that slows you down and will drag you down in your race. It's not necessarily sinful but it slows you down. What are those things? We are to continually lay them aside.

When I worked at Masters College, there was a cross-country team on campus and it was always really obvious who they were. First, they didn't wear a whole lot of clothes. "Okay, there are the runners." No one else would dare wear such short shorts. These are guys I'm talking about. Why? They wear that so that it would not hinder their running. They would come into the cafeteria and they would eat differently. They only chose food that helped them in their running, food that strengthened them, food that would not cause them to gain weight. They deliberately chose what they ate based on what would help them run. They also always spent time together. I mean, it's a very austere lifestyle, those runners. I mean, it was a lot of commitment for a very painful event that hardly anybody went to watch. There wasn't a whole lot of glory in it. Do we have any runners here? There we go. Yeah.

So everything in your life, you had to make decisions that either hindered or helped your running, so you would eat the right food, you would wear the right clothes during the race, you would go to bed earlier than everyone else, and you would wake up earlier than everyone else. And to do that successfully, they usually had to room together because what other college guy wanted to go to bed at 9 o'clock and wake up at 4 in the morning every day? So it had a certain isolating impact on them and they needed each other's encouragement to keep going. Everything they did revolved around running the race with endurance and what was interesting too, I mean it was great to win the race, to be the first one to come in, but what's so interesting about so many of these cross-country runners is they were happy if they beat their original time, right? If they just got better. So it's very similar to what we're talking about here because to win the race of faith, it's not to beat everyone else or to run it better than everyone else, it's to finish it, and it's not just a given that not all who start out on this race finish it, as Jesus said.

So just like a long-distance runner, we are to lay aside every hindrance, every weight, all excess baggage, and the sin which clings so closely. You see, the point of the Christian life is not just to stop sinning, it's not just to lay aside sin, it's not just to be a better version of yourself. You lay aside sin so that your faith will be strengthened and you will endure. If you think of it that way, it's a completely different approach. You see, it's interesting, the race of faith and the life of sanctification is a long one. It is an endurance race. You will never be perfect in this life. You will never be completely what you ought to be.

What do you do when you see that you sinned in some way? How do you respond? Let's say you fall, you fall down, do you lay there and feel sorry for yourself? "Oh, I did it again." It's a very common thing, right? It's a very common way to respond to our failures. You see the goal in this Christian life is not to never sin, it is to persevere and to continually put it to death, to lay it aside on a constant basis so that you will finish the race faithfully. And listen, it's just like a soldier on Normandy Beach on D-Day. They have landed on the beach and they are going to take that bunker. When they get knocked down, do they lay there and feel sorry for themselves and say, "Oh, I'm such a bad soldier"? No, they get up as quick as they can, and they keep going and some of them get scared and their buddy comes along and says, "Hey, come on, we've got to take that bunker! Let's go!" That's the church. We've got a hill to take. Let's go. We've got a race to finish. Let's go. Don't lay there and feel sorry for yourself. Get up. What enables us to do that? The fact that Christ has died for you and has cleansed your sin. So when you sin, it's not all over. It's not all over when you sin, but you've got to get up. Don't let it harden your heart. Don't let it take you out of the race. That's exactly what Satan would want. Don't let it take you out of the race. Get up. Keep running. Throw it aside. It clings closely, expect that. Expect sin to be nearby, temptation to sin will always be there. Don't get discouraged when this race is hard. It's supposed to be that way. Get up and keep going.

"Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." This race that is set before us is different for each one of us. It's longer for some, shorter for others. We all experience similar but different difficulties. You are to run the race set before you. This reminds me

of when Peter was talking to Jesus after the resurrection. Jesus says, "Peter, basically you're going to end up being crucified for me." And Peter turns around and looks at John and says, "Lord, what about that guy? What about him?" He says basically, "Don't worry about him. You follow me. You follow the race I have laid out in front of you. Don't worry about what everyone else is going through. Don't compare your life to theirs." You have a race laid out in front of you by a sovereign and caring and loving Lord. Run the race that he has given you to run. It is set out in front of you.

So the third way to run this race with endurance after listening to those witnesses, laying aside hindrances, lastly, we are looking to Jesus. This idea of looking is with intent focus and it is also a present participle which means it's ongoing, it's continual. You are looking to Jesus. To look to someone, it's not just looking at them. You are looking to them to receive something: to receive help, to receive strength, to receive instruction. You look to Jesus. Not looking at him, you're not just staring at him, you're not just aware that he's there, you don't just have a picture on the wall that someone painted in the Middle Ages. You are looking to Jesus for help.

And it goes on here. What is it? What are we looking to him for? It says that he is "the founder and the perfecter of our faith." This idea of founder can have the idea of originator, author, or even leader, pioneer. Jesus is all of those things. He is the author of faith. He is the one that created this race. He is the one that designed this race. He is also the first one to run it perfectly. He is the first one to live a life of perfect faith. He ran this race ahead of us and he showed us how to run it.

And he is also the perfecter of our faith. He is the completer. Now, in the Greek it doesn't have "our faith" in there, it just has faith. The perfecter of faith. It still could be referring to our specific faith, but I think it's referring to faith as a means of salvation, faith as the means of salvation. What I mean by that is that Jesus, he laid out faith as the way to be saved. He ran that race and in so doing he also made salvation by faith possible. He started it way back when and he completed it. He by his death made faith the means of salvation. So if he had not perfected it, if he had not died, if he had not offered himself as a sacrifice, then your faith would be worthless. You would not be able to be saved by faith if Christ had not died.

Now I want to take you back to Hebrews 2 to show you this. Hebrews 2. Look at verse 8, the second half of verse 8, it says, "Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." Okay, so he tasted death on everyone's behalf. Verse 10, "For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering." Do you see that word "founder" there? That's our word, author, founder, pioneer. He is the founder of salvation and he was made perfect through suffering. That's quite a statement, right? What do you mean that Christ was made perfect? Was he not already perfect? Was there anything wrong with Christ? No, but he could not be the founder of

salvation without suffering. He could not be the perfect Savior unless he went through what he went through.

Look at verse 14, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself," Jesus, "likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." Isn't that amazing? That to destroy the one who had the power of death, Jesus had to die. It had to be this way.

Verse 16, "For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham." Angels once they fall away, there is no hope for them, but he does help the offspring of Abraham. Who are the offspring of Abraham? All who believe.

Verse 17, "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect." That's you and me. He had to be made like us, "so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Look at that. Look at what that's saying. Because he suffered he is able to help you who are being tempted. I mean, the implication is that if he did not suffer, if he did not live a full life in the flesh on earth perfectly through suffering, enduring everything that you have to go through as a human, under the curse of the world, if he had not been crucified and whipped and finally raised again, he would not be able to help you. He had to be made like you and me.

Remember in the garden? Remember Jesus praying to the Father? Remember what he pleaded with the Father about? He said, "If it is your will," and he is sweating drops of blood, he is crying out in great anguish, "If it is your will, let this cup pass from me. If there is any other way, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not my will but your will be done." If there is any other way. He didn't want to go through that. It wasn't easy for him, but he did it because there was no other way. No other way for you to be saved. No other way to reconcile the world to himself. No other way to be your faithful high priest. No other way to truly help sinners. That's amazing.

He is the founder and the perfecter of faith. And there are other passages in Hebrews that lay that out and I would recommend you reading them. Hebrews is awesome and if you just read through it in one sitting with Hebrews 12:1 and 2 in your mind, Hebrews 12:1 and 2 really is a summary of basically the whole book of Hebrews. Everything he's trying to say is summed up in those verses. Read Hebrews through that lens and it's amazing to see what God has done through Christ.

So that is the great salvation, the great Savior to whom we look. We are to hold fast to him, to our confession of our hope with confidence. Look at chapter 4, verse 15, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." Jesus knows how to be tempted without giving in to it. Go to him for help.

Verse 16, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." When you are struggling with sin and trials of life, you are tempted to give up, you are tempted to doubt, look to Jesus. Look to him for help. Look to him. It's like Peter on the waves when he is walking to Jesus on the water and he's doing great until he starts to look at the waves and he begins to sink. Jesus says, "Why did you doubt?" It's the same thing when it comes to the Gospel. Life gets hard and we are tempted to doubt, we're tempted to doubt that Christ's sacrifice was enough to cover my sin, but his sacrifice and his person, we doubt whether or not he's enough to sanctify us, to change us, to grow us, whether or not his reward is real. Don't throw away that confidence. Do the opposite. When you are struggling with sin, draw near to the throne of grace with confidence because that is where your help and mercy come from. Don't turn to your own works. Don't turn to your own ideas. Don't turn to man's philosophies and religions. Hold firm to Christ.

Chapter 5, verse 8, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered." Jesus had to learn obedience experientially. Not that he ever disobeyed but he learned it through what he suffered. He learned what obedience really meant experientially because he did it. Verse 9, "And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him."

Okay, there is so much more to be said, obviously you could spend years in this book and I want to say it all. If you ever just want to sit down and have lunch and talk about Hebrews, let's do it. It's awesome.

Therefore, let's go to chapter 12, "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." There are two different ways that that could be taken, the joy set before him. It could be taken as he rejected the joy that he could have had and instead accepted the shame of the cross. The other way it could be taken is that he looked forward to the joy that was on the other side of the cross. And I think I take that second view, but either way is true.

"Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." What was that joy? It was bringing many sons to glory. It was being exalted to the right hand of the Father. It was having a people for his own possession who were zealous for good, Titus 2. That was the joy set before him, that he would have fellowship with you and me in the presence of the Father. For the joy that was on the other side of that suffering, he endured the cross.

"Despising the shame." He counted the shame of little value, as a small thing compared to what he would gain.

And he "is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." That means his work is complete. You see it several times in Hebrews. He is seated there. A priest doesn't sit down. They are always working. Christ made his sacrifice one time for all and he sat down. His work is done. There are no more sacrifices needed. There are no other priests, just him, and that is what we hold firm to. He is the substance of our faith. He is the example of faith. He is the perfecter of faith. He is the goal of our faith.

So endure, verse 3, "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted." Verse 12, "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." And this is not dependent on you.

I will read this again, we read it last week, I'll read this benediction after Ted comes up to praise. But God will equip you to do what he wants you to do so draw near to him.

Let's pray.

Father, we entrust ourselves to you and we want you to be honored and we pray for the strength to do what you have called us to. You are worthy and you are good. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.