

# Hebrews 6:9-12

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Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[ 0 : 00 ] I invite you to take out your copy of God's Word and turn to Hebrews chapter 6. We're going to continue our verse-by-verse study of the book of Hebrews.

! With today's text, which is Hebrews chapter 6, verses 9-12. Before I read it, I remind you, beloved, that this is God's Word to us.

It was written for His glory and our good. And so we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

Hebrews chapter 6, verse 9 and following. Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things.

Things that belong to salvation. For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for His name in serving the saints, as you still do.

[ 1 : 02 ] And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end. So that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

This morning, as we look at these verses, I want to first draw your attention to the word that the author of Hebrews uses in addressing the church that this letter is written to.

He gives them the title, beloved. Beloved. Which means loved ones or loved. It sounds so very churchy to say beloved.

It's not a word I ever use, at least rarely outside of this room. But it just simply means loved ones. And He does this.

He gives them this title. He addresses them in this way after saying in the beginning of verse 9, though we speak in this way.

[ 2 : 08 ] So just prior to this, verses 4 through 8, He has issued to them a warning. And it's a similar warning. It's been carrying all throughout the text so far.

However, it is the large reason this letter was written that they would be careful to be sure that they are, in fact, in the faith.

Remember that this little church had suffered much and they were being tempted to go back to Judaism. To forsake the following of Christ for the sake of avoiding discomfort.

Avoiding the trial that was coming their way. And so just previously, by way of reminder, verses 4 through 8 of chapter 6, the author of Hebrews has written, For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away to restore them again to repentance.

Since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding Him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God.

[ 3 : 33 ] But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. He has rebuked these Christians for being dull of hearing in chapter 5 and verse 11.

And has spoken of the need to go on to maturity in chapter 6 verse 1. And then issued this very grave warning concerning land that has received the water of God's grace, and then produced only thorns and thistles.

And what he says of it is that this land will be burned. This pastor, out of concern for those who may leave the faith, has warned them in chapter 2 and verse 1, to pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

What is he referring to? The gospel of Jesus Christ. That we can only be justified before God by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

He is concerned that these he's writing to would be apostate. That they would leave the faith and show themselves to have never been Christians at all.

[ 4 : 59 ] He shares Paul's sentiment when Paul writes in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 18 and following, where Paul exhorts Timothy, wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience.

By rejecting this, referring to faith and a good conscience, some have made shipwreck of their faith. The author of Hebrews will go on in this chapter to say, in verses 19 and the beginning of verse 20, we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.

A hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf. Jesus Christ is the anchor for the soul that is storm-tossed.

So he has spoken strongly about those who did not make Jesus the steadfast anchor of their souls. Who have drifted and shipwrecked their faith.

And he is warning these Christians not to be deceived by false conversion. To not put too much credit in their religious experience.

[ 6 : 18 ] To not find themselves among the drifted and shipwrecked. And it is with this in mind, as he's completing that portion of his case, that he calls them beloved.

It is significant. I hope that if it doesn't already arrest on this word, that after this morning, as you're reading your scripture, when you see the word beloved, it will cause you to pause and think about all that that term means for you in Christ.

I believe for the author of Hebrews that there are two senses to this address. Reasons that he uses this term. I think first, he is simply saying, you are loved by me.

I am penning this letter for your sake. I care deeply about you. It's a familial term.

He is relating to them as their brother. He is saying to them, you are my brothers and you are my sisters. You are my beloved. Much like the apostle John does in 1 John 3, verse 1 and following where he writes, see what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God.

[ 7 : 49 ] And so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. So the apostle John is saying to these Christians, we are brothers and sisters.

And then at the beginning of verse 2, he says, beloved, we are God's children now. He is expressing to them a great affection for them.

Secondly, and more importantly, he is saying you are loved by God. You are loved by God. In fact, the author's ability to call them beloved has its beginning in God's adoption of them.

God's familial terminology. His inclusion of these people into his family. The author belongs to him and they to him because they all belong to God.

Just after Jesus was baptized, Matthew 3, verse 17 tells us, and behold, a voice from heaven said, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

[ 8 : 59 ] And so if we are in Jesus, if we have been adopted in him, his righteousness given to us, our sin given to him, this term transfers to us.

No longer enemies, but beloved children. And I hope this word prompts that in you.

A contemplation about who you are in Christ. Have you noticed my use of this same term as I address you?

I also mean it in both sentences. Have you noticed that I most regularly use it when I'm about to say something particularly difficult or when I'm trying to bring a particular comfort or draw your attention?

I've already done it once this morning and I do that every Sunday morning. Beloved, this is God's word to us. I'm founding that in.

[ 10 : 06 ] My great love for you because of God's great love for us. He's written us this good book so we should pay attention to it is what I'm saying to you. God loves you and he's written you a word.

Pay attention this morning. I'm saying I love you and more importantly, God loves you. And that is what the author of Hebrews is doing here for his original audience and for us.

He has just said a particularly difficult thing and he is now bringing a particular comfort. He has warned them not to neglect such a great salvation by going on to maturity.

And now he gives to them his confidence that they are in fact Christians and that they will persevere to the end.

He is convinced of the sincerity of their love for Christ. And had they not separated by time and been friends, he would have agreed with the Puritan theologian William Pink.

[11:15] This is on your bulletin who said, God presently gives an everlasting assurance of salvation to all who love Christ sincerely. He is writing now at this point in the text as he has been warning and warning and warning and rebuking and warning some comfort to them.

He is offering to them his confidence and he is hoping for and wanting them to have this confidence. And so that is a general outline for today's study.

Number one, the author has confidence that they are Christians. Christians. And number two, the author wants them to have confidence that they are Christians.

So first, he expresses this confidence. He says, yet in your case, beloved, he's just talked about people who appeared to be Christians and showed themselves not to be.

Those who had drifted. Those who had make shipwreck of their faith. Those who did not go on to maturity. Those who rejected Jesus as the Christ. Yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things.

[12:28] Things that belong to salvation. These were things that he could see and observe and been told of that existed with this little church.

What are these things that belong to salvation? salvation. The Christian life will give evidence to its faithfulness. Good trees will bear good fruit.

Now, there are certainly external evidences and we want to consider and we want to talk about those. But before we do, I want to talk just briefly this morning about internal evidences.

A thing that cannot be measured from the outside. A thing that the author of Hebrews could not look upon them and know with great confidence. Because if you are in fact in Christ, if He has made you new, He has made you new by His Spirit.

He has given to you the gift of a Spirit that indwells you, makes you new, causes you to walk in His ways.

[13:39] Right? Replaces that heart of stone with the heart of flesh. Paul writes about this in Romans 8, verse 15-16, where he writes, For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, Abba, Father, Daddy, Father.

And then verse 16 says, The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Right? We have the spirit that testifies to this, is a seal of this, that communicates to us that we belong to God.

No longer a spirit of fear, but a spirit of adoption as sons. Right? An internal knowing that we belong to God.

This is a precious reality that the spirit of God speaks to us in this way if we have Him. J.I. Packer in his wonderful work Knowing God, which I commend to you, wrote this, If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his Father.

If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.

[15:07] For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new and better than the old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the fatherhood of God.

Father is the Christian name for God. This internal testimony works for our assurance.

Jesus said in John 14 in verse 27, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you.

Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. Now, beloved, if you are in Christ, there are times in your life you may doubt your salvation.

I am not saying that if you ever doubt your salvation, you are not in fact in Christ. But through prayer and fellowship and the study of the word, if you have the spirit, the spirit will give you this adoptive status, this understanding, right, will not make you in fear, but will grant you peace.

[16:17] So there's this internal, a bit subjective evidencing, but more specifically, I think what our author is writing about is external evidencing, right, again, things he could see and hear about, could report on.

In verse 10, he expresses this, for God is not unjust so as to overlook your work, activity, outward sign, and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, right, you once did it, and he goes on to say at the end of verse 10, as you still do.

Not just past work and love, but also present work and love. Later on in the book of Hebrews, he writes in chapter 10, 32 and following, but recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. There's one example in our text, in this book, of what the author of Hebrews here is talking about. This work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.

[ 17 : 48 ] So, what's happening here is that people are being publicly mocked, in some cases imprisoned, and for the church, right, who's bearing the name of Christ, to identify with those in prison, to come to them and bring aid to them, because they weren't being taken care of in prison, they were just simply locked up.

They were to be fed, they were to be fed by family. They were also then taking on the name of Christ. Christ had become most precious to them, a better possession and an abiding one, verse 34 of chapter 10 says, that they were willing to bear up under this reproach and this affliction, right, to love those who were being mistreated.

And this is because they understood the commands of Christ. John chapter 13, verse 34, and verse 35, Jesus says, a new commandment I give to you that you love one another.

Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

And as a mental exercise, it is helpful to think about John 13, 35 and replace in there all of the things we tend to think will make us known as Jesus' disciples.

[ 19 : 21 ] disciples and there is any measure of them. Going to church on Sunday morning does not necessarily mean you're a disciple of Jesus Christ. Claiming to be an evangelical does not necessarily make you a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Voting for a particular party does not necessarily make you a disciple of Jesus Christ. Going on a mission trip every spring break does not necessarily make you a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Jesus brings it down to this one thing. By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

And this bears itself out in so many ways which may include going to church on Sundays and going on mission trips. All types of things are loving.

But just before that he has said just as I have loved you you also are to love one another. And so something we can be sure of is that the type of love he's talking about is a sacrificial love.

[ 20 : 30 ] It's a love that gives of yourself for the sake of for the highest good of another. The author of Hebrews is doing that very thing here.

We live in a culture that defines love by the way in which the person receives the love. So if we say something to someone that they don't particularly like and it doesn't feel loving to them then our culture is very quick to dismiss the action as unloving.

It's aimed at how the object feels about what's done. The author of Hebrews has just called them beloved. He just said you are loved ones.

I love you. And he's been so very hard on them. He has just finished this harsh rebuke to now go on to be an encouragement.

So love takes on all kinds of forms. But we know that the Christian life is a life of sacrificial love.

[ 21 : 42 ] And they had expressed this. And this was giving this pastor a confidence in their salvation. Secondly, the author wants them to have confidence that they are Christians.

He doesn't want it to end just with his confidence. He also wants them to be confident. Verse 11 he writes, and we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end.

Not some assurance, not a little measure of assurance, but full assurance, the full measure, complete assurance, an unshakable confidence is what he's talking about here.

And not just today, but today and tomorrow and the next until the end. He wants them to persevere. He wants them to press on in knowing God and doing so to the end.

And he gives us some ideas about how it is that we can have this assurance. So how is it that we can have full assurance?

[ 22 : 58 ] Number one, don't be lazy. Number one, don't be lazy. The first part of verse 12, he writes so that you may not be sluggish.

I think that this particular challenge, we would not be sluggish, plagues the American church.

I think many of us would find that we are far too often, far too apathetic, sitting back, seems that so often, comfort is our very worst enemy.

We don't see that the stakes are high. We kind of float through life. And here he's saying the opposite. Don't be sluggish.

Don't be lazy. Put yourself to the task. task. This word here translated in the ESV sluggish is the very same word translated in chapter 5 and verse 11 as dull.

[ 24 : 09 ] When he rebukes them that they're being dull of hearing, you could also say sluggish of hearing, lazy of hearing.

The author of Hebrews has rebuked them for being sluggish in their hearing and does not also want them to become sluggish in their acting. And there's a connection between the two, between our hearing and our obedience.

And I would suggest to you, although not in the text today, that there's also a connection between our obedience and our hearing. That God doesn't entrust us with more until we're obedient with what he's already taught us.

That part of the growing up process is that when God gives you something to obey, you obey that thing and he continues to give you more to obey and grows you up into Christ.

James, in James chapter 1 verse 22 through 25, most of the book of James is about this very issue. He writes, but be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves.

[ 25 : 22 ] Do not deceive yourself. What he's saying essentially is that you're not hearing it if you're not doing it. Verse 23, for if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.

For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. He's merely saying you're not using the mirror for the purpose of the mirror. You don't get what it's for verse 25, but the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty and perseveres, presses on to the end in his doing, being no hearer who forgets, but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

Be doers and not hearers only. Do not be lazy in your pursuit of God. So that's to say it in the negative, but I think it's also very important that we say it in the positive.

So secondly, how can you have assurance? Work. Work to have assurance. The last part of verse 11, he says, show the same earnestness to have full assurance and hope until the end.

This idea of earnestness means a serious devotion to, to pick up the task of having full assurance of hope until the end.

[ 26 : 51 ] Beloved, we are far too informed by our feelings. I think way too often, we wait to be obedient until it feels good to be obedient.

We are waiting for a feeling of assurance and we want to have feelings and we are not stoics.

Feelings can be good and they can be helpful.

They can be informative for us. We want our feelings to coincide with. We want them to catch up to the truth. So, here he's not saying feel assured.

He's saying have earnestness. Show devotion to. Right? Work to have assurance of hope until the end. Be a doer and let the feeling of it catch up.

No one can be saved by their works. The gospel of Jesus Christ says this to us again and again and again. We needed Jesus' righteousness, his perfect law keeping.

[ 27 : 59 ] Right? No one can be saved by their works. But saving faith does work. Evidences the faith. Again, James, he's helpful to us in this chapter 2 and verse 14.

He says, What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? James is making the case that he's merely this person he's referring to, just has some mental assent.

says, like my children say, I believe in Jesus but they don't know him, they have not been changed by him, they're not being granted the spirit of Christ and this is the great issue of our day.

I say it over and over again, I feel like a broken record at times. The gospel of Jesus Christ is that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

God saves those who are his. He moves in them to repentance and faith. He causes them to turn from sin and to believe in Christ. To place all of their confidence in who Jesus is.

[ 29 : 19 ] And this is a great work of God. This is a monergistic work. God saves, God keeps. It's in that salvation that we now walk, that we evidence it.

Just because you have raised your hand or walked down an aisle does not necessarily mean you're a Christian. What evidences your faith?

And remember that he's being encouraging to this end. Right? He's being encouraging to this end. I have a confidence. I want you to have a confidence. Right?

I'm observing. You continue to do this work. Be earnest in your working. Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 4 through 10.

Some of this will sound familiar from our time with the children. But God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses.

[ 30 : 26 ] Dead. Inactive. Unable. He made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved and raises up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Right? In order to put on display his greatness he has saved a people. Verse 8. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God not a result of works so that no one may boast.

And then verse 10. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works. He saved us for good works which evidence this saving power in our lives which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

So do you want to have assurance? Do you want to feel assured? Then get to work. Pick up the scripture and read the commands. How is it that God would have me walk?

[ 31 : 43 ] Learn to love righteousness. Put off old habits by putting on new habits. And you will find in doing this if you are in Christ your trajectory will be towards holiness.

You will find that it gets easier and easier to do these things. We never become perfect beside of heaven but we progress toward it. Always making progress bit by bit by bit.

One degree of glory to another degree of glory as the spirit of Christ powerfully works within us. We are meant to be a people.

That is why we are left here. We are We still carry the baggage of our flesh around. We have a great deal of sympathy with those who are not in Christ because we still feel we still experience the effect of a fallen nature.

But we have been set free from sin. We have been delivered from it. We no longer have to sin because we have the spirit of Christ. We can be obedient to him and we're meant to be moving ever heavenward.

[ 32 : 53 ] And this is how we exalt Christ on the earth. This is why as a people, as a church, we're meant to be drawn together and distinct in that way.

That our community would look at us and go, what is it with those people? They're improving people. They're so humble as they walk before their God. They're putting off sin and they're putting on righteousness.

What an odd people. And to some that'll be attractive and to some it'll be repulsive. So, don't be lazy. Secondly, work.

Third, imitate. Last part of verse 12, the author says, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

This life is not long. We are here but a moment, right? A vapor in the wind. The older I get, the more I feel that.

[ 34 : 02 ] The life seems to be accelerating. I've asked people older than me, does it ever slow down? And I say, nope, it keeps right on. I turned 39 at the end of January and already was dreading 40, like, approaching it.

I was already dreading it. And we are almost halfway there already. It felt like yesterday I was going, oh, 39, and I'm going to blink again, and I'm going to be 40.

Life does not last that long, but in our struggle with sin, it feels like forever. God, deliver me from this body of death. Every day as I set my face towards him just seems like such a struggle.

And to walk in a world that is hostile toward us, as we're following the way of God, we are bound to get tired. Just as the Christians of this church that this author is writing to were getting tired, right?

They were beleaguered, right? They were worn out. They had suffered and they would suffer. The author of Hebrews was writing to them and us to tell us and them to imitate those who went before us.

[ 35 : 18 ] Look to those who finished well, who already finished and who finished well. And the author of Hebrews is likely setting them and us up for the hall of faith that is chapter 11.

If you're familiar with the book of Hebrews, chapter 11 lays out a series of people who by faith and patience inherited the promises.

And so I would like for us to go there together. So turn over a few pages if you will to Hebrews chapter 11. As we think about being imitators, now this phrase, through faith and patience, in extra biblical Hebrew writing, was most often attributed to Abraham.

And it's very possible at this point in the Hebrew listener's mind, that's where the brain goes immediately. Oh, Abraham, faith and patience. And he is talked about most extensively in Hebrews chapter 11.

But I think the author of Hebrews also means to gather others into that number. So yes, Abraham, but also to add to that.

[ 36 : 42 ] And we now have, as I'm going to add to Hebrews chapter 11, not in an inspired sense, but we now have many who have gone before us. So I commend biography to you to read about the faith and patience of others as well.

Verse 1 of Hebrews 11 says, now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

So as we're tired, as we're beat down, as we're beleaguered, as this church was, faith is believing in the promises of God that are out there. We're not there yet, right?

But we're believing we will get there. It's believing that. And so you can see as he goes through this text talking about the faith of these people that this was a patient faith.

So faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation.

[ 37 : 48 ] By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts.

And through his faith though he died he still speaks. To who? To us. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death and he was not found because God had taken him.

Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please him for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

By faith Noah being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

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. 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.

[ 39 : 08 ] For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive even when she was past the age since she considered him faithful who had promised.

therefore from one man and him as good as dead were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

I just love that he calls Abraham as good as dead. 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.

They all recognized that there was a greater promise for them and they did not know exactly how the greater promise would come to pass. We now know it comes to pass in Christ.

Verse 14 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.

[ 40 : 22 ] 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 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.

He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead from which figuratively speaking he did receive him back. By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

By faith Jacob when dying blessed each of the sons of Joseph bowing in worship over the head of his staff. By faith Joseph at the end of his life made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

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.

[ 41 : 38 ] He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt for he was looking to the reward. By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood so that the destroyer of the firstborn may not touch them.

By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land but the Egyptians when they attempted to do the same were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been circled for seven days.

By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty, foreign armies to flight.

He's going through the entire Old Testament telling us and them pay attention to the faith and patience of those who have gone before you.

Be imitators of them. This by the way is the text that makes a lot of people think this was originally a sermon that was recorded because he says he doesn't have time and he's writing a letter.

[ 43 : 10 ] But verse 35 women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured refusing to accept release so they might rise again to a better life.

Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned. They were sawn in two. They were killed with a sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats destitute, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering about in deserts and mountains and in dens and caves of the earth.

You were not alone in your suffering. Verse 39 And 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.

He's talking about the coming of Christ and the saving of the church. Chapter 12 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.

Run with endurance, not lazily, not lackadaisically, not sluggish, but competing, running, being earnest in this, and doing so with endurance, with patience.

[ 44 : 45 ] Verse 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 acceded at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.

So as we look to be imitators of those who have gone before us in this life, we are also meant to look to Christ, who suffered for our sake.

Only undeserving sufferer who has ever existed, who had no fault in him whatsoever, but took on our fault and suffered in our stead.

Took away God's wrath due us, and he drank it to its end. It's an astounding thing, beloved, that if you are in fact in Christ, you have been changed.

[ 45 : 57 ] It's doctrine of regeneration. You're not the same old you. You're a new creation, creation, and you're being given by the spirit new impulse.

So just as the author of Hebrews is looking at this little faithful church, just as I can look out on so many of you, some of you I don't know that well, but many of you I can look at and say, I have a confidence.

confidence. We also want to have our own confidence. I want you to have a confidence that you're in Christ because if you don't, you may not be in Christ.

I don't mean that to cause fear in you unless you need to be fearful. Maybe your end is destruction and your eternity is torment and separation from our Most High God.

These are the loving, kind words of God for us this morning that we would repent and believe, that we would press on, that we would work to have assurance.

[ 47 : 04 ] And so in summary, some application. First, be part of a faithful church if you are not already.

Be part of a biblical church. For the sake of time, I can't explain everything I mean by that. Be part of a church. Beloved, the church is not an afterthought.

You're not the center of the gospel and then God says, oh, sure, and also gather, that could be good for you. God saved a people, he saved a church, and these local expressions of it are given tools to help us in this way, to help you have assurance.

you need followers of Jesus Christ to have a confidence in you, and you need opportunity to love what God loves, to give that evidence.

I love God's people, and I serve God's people. Christianity is not a solo sport. Secondly, be confident.

[ 48 : 12 ] press on to have assurance. Assurance is such a blessing. I still sin.

I have times where I do things that would say to God, I am not your son. I'm going to act in total contradiction to the reality that you love me and you've given me good commands.

But it is a wonderful thing when that happens to get to go to the cross of Christ and rejoice that I am his. That he accomplished a work in me and that is unshakable because it's his doing.

I sit and counsel so many that sin and they just don't know. I want you to know. It's a good thing to know. So be confident, but be confident by not being lazy, by working, pressing on, being earnest and knowing, and by imitating those who have gone before you, faith and patience receive the promise, and especially by imitating Christ.

Let's pray together.