

Finishing Well

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Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[0:00] Let us pray. Our Father, this morning we are gathered because of your grace, because of your grace, because!

Because of the Lord Jesus, and we come with humble, dependent, confident hearts to ask that your Spirit would do a work in taking your word that you have given to us and that will abide forever, and using that word to draw us to a greater affection for Christ, a greater determination to walk uprightly and wholly before you, a greater commitment to be focused and persistent in setting our affections upon the Lord Jesus, that in the year to come, we would grow to be more like Him, to His glory. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. It is my privilege to preach to you this morning. Pastor Andrew asked me several months ago if I would do that, and one of the standard things that goes with an invitation to preach is a practical question of, okay, what would you like me to preach on from the Bible?

Well, and he said, well, whatever you want to. He said, we are coming to the end of the year, and you could comment on that, or you could maybe think about the future, and I want you to turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1 and 2.

Let me read the passage. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside, also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and 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 God.

[2:48] I don't think I've preached many times without beginning my sermon pretty much the same way. And that has always been, in most cases, to appeal to you to pray for me as I preach.

The principle is found over and over again, particularly in the letters, the epistles that the apostle wrote, where he said, pray for us that the word of God may have free course and bear fruit among you.

Elsewhere, he says this, pray for us that I may speak as I ought to speak. And I want to tell you that when a man is tasked with the responsibility of preaching for a period of time, you're reminded of what it says in, I think in Proverbs, where it says, in a multitude of words there lacks not for sin. The more you say, the more probable it is that you say something you shouldn't. Agreed? How many of you recognize that Bible truth to be undeniably evident in your life? Okay. So with that kind of as a starter, I mean, I recognize that I need your prayer that the word of God would have free course, that it would not be hindered in any way.

But I also ask that you pray that I don't say anything I shouldn't say. I'm thankful for the many years that I had the privilege of preaching here, and on those occasions where I did say things I shouldn't, there were those of you who brought me to task.

[4:21] And I said, you know, Pastor, I don't know if that was a good thing to say. And there are occasions where I had to come before this congregation and say, that was ill-framed and not well thought out.

Will you forgive me for it? So pray ahead of time that I don't have to do that again. It's something I particularly didn't like doing, and so you can kind of delay that process. Well, we're looking at Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1 and 2.

And let me kind of push it together so you have three thoughts in front of you. And as I was thinking about this, I've had many, many weeks to pray and prepare for this sermon.

One of the challenges of preaching that Pastor Andrew and Pastor David certainly recognize is that in the process of studying, you have that unenviable task of figuring out what of the 100% that

you've gathered, the 90% that you should throw away because you don't have the time to say it. So here we are looking at this passage, and as we push in on that, I want you to kind of focus in on three different things that are going to come through the passage, and I trust stick in your heart. [5:28] Number one, we have the examples to follow. Number two, there's a race we have to run. And number three, we have Jesus to focus on.

Well, as we begin here, the passage says, therefore, and it reminds us of what has come before. And certainly, as you think about the book, you recognize that the centerpiece of the book of Hebrews is the Lord Jesus. It begins in chapter 1, saying, in the past, God spoke to us through the prophets, but now He has spoken to us through His Son.

And over and over again in the book of Hebrews, we see the Lord Jesus lifted up as being the centerpiece of this book and the principal thing that we are to focus on.

And while we do not know all the specifics of what Jesus taught, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, you remember that story, don't you?

[6:34] After the resurrection, there are two disciples kind of moping along as they're walking on the road to Emmaus, and Jesus shows up. I like it the way it is in the King James.

It says, their eyes were holden. It's not something we say anymore, right? But they couldn't, they didn't get it. It was Jesus with them. And they were kind of commiserating about the sadness of their soul and the difficulty of, you know, they'd hoped.

And you know what Jesus does? It says that beginning in the law and the prophets, He began to teach them about the necessity of the work of Christ on the cross.

And I'm thinking that Hebrews does somewhat a similar task, doesn't it?

Because Hebrews brings back into focus over and over again the supremacy and the sweetness of Jesus. As an aside, if you are challenged this morning by the prompting of the Spirit of God to grow in knowing and loving Jesus more, I would suggest that a goal for this coming year would be that you soak up the Gospels, read them over and over again, with that recurring prayer that we find in Psalms 119, Open thou mine eyes that I might behold wondrous truths out of thy law.

[8:10] Beloved, can I tell you that to read the Scriptures without bathing that with a preface of prayer can be a little challenging?

Have you found that to be true? When you come to your private time with the Lord and you don't begin with humility and prayer and asking the Father in heaven to bless you and give to you understanding in the Word, you kind of could just crank on through.

And so this year, if you do want to grow in your affection for the Lord Jesus, mark that effort by prayer and then get into the Gospels. And once you're into the Gospels repetitively, I would work my way into the book of Hebrews and top it off with the book of Revelation.

Now, I don't mean to suggest that there's one book in the Bible that is necessarily supremely more important than another, but if you want to get to know Jesus, you have to read the principal parts that kind of push it together so you can see it pretty easily.

Now, more particularly, Hebrews chapter 12 follows the closing notes of Hebrews chapter 10, verse 29, where the author says this, he says, The summary of those who are genuine believers that we see recorded in Hebrews chapter 11 is that it was their faith that led them to do the various things that they did.

[9:49] Now, can you imagine building an ark for 120 years and everybody's kind of marking you and thinking, What in the world are you doing? Do you realize that has no practical utility today? No one's ever done it.

And there he is cranking away because he had faith. We mark the fact that Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice because of faith.

We remind ourselves that Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker was God. We remind ourselves that Moses refused the pleasures of Egypt and endured the hardships and difficulties that came with his ministry to the people of Israel because of his faith.

We're reminded that the people of Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry land. And over and over again in the chapter that has this record of individuals whose faith was significant, we see that the thing that they were focused on was not themselves, but the person and work of Christ.

And that is without question the centerpiece to the entire book and the thing that we should never take our eyes off of. Now in drawing attention to this cloud of witnesses, the Holy Spirit's purpose is

not to lead us to think that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are kind of watching along with Moses to see how we're doing.

[11:19] I know it makes for good preaching to kind of suggest to you that there's a cloud of witnesses that are watching you run and to come on, Tim, keep doing it. No, that's not really what the Bible says.

And the reason I know that is because context indicates that the witnesses have borne testimony to the truth of Christ, and the testimony they give is to the sufficiency and the satisfaction in the Lord Jesus in this journey and the arduous uphill climb that we have in life.

Not only that, but the vocabulary itself. The word that is used, witness, so great a cloud of witness, is a word that speaks about someone who has the legitimate reason to bear testimony or to speak about something because he saw it, he experienced it.

Did you witness that? I did. And one of the things that you realize as you look at this record is that the individuals who are such a great cloud are a reminder that there are many who have run this race and have succeeded because of the work of Christ.

Turn back in your Bible just for a moment. You're in Hebrews chapter 12, but go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. Let me begin there in verse 6.

[12:59] Now these things took place as examples for us that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were. As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, rose up to play.

We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did. And 23,000 fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents.

Nor grumble as some of them did and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now verse 11. Now these things happen to them as an example, but they're written down for our instruction.

In other words, to kind of push it together, the reason we have some of these accounts given in Scripture is so that we can learn from what they did. Right?

Now mark this down. A fool cannot learn even from his own experiences. An intelligent man can learn from his own experiences.

[14:04] That stove was hot. I'm not doing it again. A wise man learns from the experience and counsel of others. That stove's hot. Don't touch it.

I'm not because I'm willing to learn from what you have to say. In this passage, Paul is reminding us that some of the things that we have written there for us are for our benefit so that we don't do those same things.

Now mark what we find there in verse 13. Go on to it. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

It is undeniable that when we are going through hard times, we're inclined to think that we're the only ones going through the difficulty we have at the moment. Isn't that true? The scriptures remind us that others have made that journey.

And what they have found is for our benefit that Christ is sufficient for that challenge. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but will with the temptation.

[15:15] But with the temptation, he will provide the way of escape, so that you may be able to... What's the next word? Say it with me. Endure. Endure. Not get out of it, but endure.

The thing that we need to recognize as we look at Hebrews chapter 12 is that God, in his kindness to us, gives us examples of others who have run the race and kept the faith and done the work.

I had the privilege of ministering here at Maranatha with many godly individuals. And they, on many occasions, taught me things I desperately needed to learn.

I see some of you here that if I mentioned the name Hal Burchett, you'd say, Who is that? Well, you'll meet him in heaven, but you won't be occupied with Hal. You'll see Jesus. Or Bill Driscoll. Or Lauren Goulet. I tell you, one of the dear ladies that I'll never forget, Rosetta Eddy. I don't think I ever heard her say a single unkind thing about any person in her life.

[16:37] How many of you could say that same thing? The worst I ever heard Rosetta Eddy say was this, Oh, I think we need to pray for him. I knew that meant real bad things.

Ah, we need to pray for him. Yeah. I'm still working on that one. I'll never forget one day when we were helping people move, and that's something I appreciate that this ministry still engages in actively.

It was one of those black trash bag moves. Pastor, have you ever had one of those lately? It's like, you know, the people tell you they need to move, and you go to the house and say, All right, we're coming with a crowd, and we'll have a truck, and I want you to have everything in boxes and label what room you want in, and you arrive on Saturday morning at nine, and the house looks like it had just finished filming for the hoarders.

And I remember one day after we'd spent hours moving things from rooms to bags to rooms, I commented to one of the deacons.

I said, Well, that was a mess. And he said, Pastor, we did that for Jesus. Oh, that one got my attention. You see, we do need examples, don't we?

[18:08] That's one of the benefits of lasting relationships in a body of believers. I am not an advocate for migratory Christianity.

Do you understand that? It's about as effective in the development of godliness as migratory marriages might be. Now, enough said.

Second thing is running the race. Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1, it says, Let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. In an earlier point in my life, when people ask me how I'm doing, I would always say it's all uphill. It still is uphill, but I'm getting closer to when I'm going to see Jesus, and I look forward to that.

But the truth of the matter is, is that it is a race. The word that is used in the Greek is the one from which we get agony.

[19:15] I ran track. 200 and 400. And one of the things about that is you can basically hold your breath and just go flat out for as long as you can, and it's over.

And only one time in my life did I ever run a long-distance race. Some of the members of the class talked me into doing it because it was necessary to get points for winning the school prize.

And so it's like, oh, can I tell you that I have nothing but high regard for people who run distance? It is this painful, deliberate, masochistic discipline of telling your body that it's not in charge, and it just keeps on going on and on and on and on.

The word agony is appropriate for it. And here is the author saying, listen, you're not in a little sprint. You're in a long-distance race, and you have to run this race with recurring commitment to do it.

There's not a one of us that can say that every single time we've opened the Bible or come to pray, that we've had those kind of warm, tingly feelings like just the heavens have opened up, and we've found the glory of God in our heart, and we have just read, oh, it's beautiful.

[20:53] And every day has been like that, right? No. Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Over the years, one of the things that I've found with great sadness is that there are more people that start well than finish well. I remember when I was in seminary, what a rookie back then, and I remember just kind of observing there were 50 of us that were sitting in the freshman class. There were 100 of us. That's what it was, 100. And I noticed that there were 25 or 50 that were graduating, and then they commented one day that only 25 would still be in ministry five years after that.

I have nothing but high regard for those who serve in ministry here, particularly for those who sacrifice their time to serve as deacons.

I remember in a pastoral search, I had one young man ask me, so how hard do I have to work? That's always a bad signal when you ask me that. I said, you only have to work as hard as our deacons do.

[22:13] Let us run with patience.

Now, in relationship to that, we mark that the author goes on to give us some practical pointers about how to run with patience this long-distance race.

It says, for one, we're to lay aside every weight. The weights are things that are not necessarily bad in themselves. We're going to get to the sin part in just a minute, but we're talking about things that can be a hindrance when you're running.

Your smartphone may be a wonderful thing. On more than one occasion, I'm directionally impaired. And on more than one occasion, when I have forgotten where I really wanted to go, I have grabbed my phone and been willing to sacrifice some of the limited data that I require, and I've said, okay, where is it that I need to be, and how am I going to...

And wonderful. Smartphones can be helpful. Am I right? It's a great thing when you're wondering about spelling, and you just don't want to send out something that shows how ignorant you are. Anybody else do that?

[23:43] Okay. Smartphones are good. But can I tell you that when you're having time with the Lord, and your phone just goes, you know, and you go, oh, maybe I better check on that. You know, somebody...

No. No. No. I hope when you come to the service, listen carefully.

I hope your phone is not a distraction from the glory and the worship that we enjoy together as believers.

Sit on it! You got it? Try being someone who communicates to your boss that you really care about what he is saying, and keep on looking at your phone while you're doing it.

How would that go? Hmm? Lay aside the weight. If we're running a race, it's appropriate for us to focus on what we're doing.

[24:52] So, we also are to lay aside sin which easily entangles us. Now, as I was studying, I was struck by the fact that there are differences of opinion on this, and there are differences of opinion on whether it's the weight or the sin or sin, and I just tell you, I think both are legitimate.

I think there are sins that affect some of us more distinctly and more particularly than others. There are some sins that I have struggled with all my life. I am a moody person by nature.

I'm kind of surprised that I haven't cried yet today. I cried when you were singing, but I tear up. It just happens. I certainly don't plan on it.

First time I ever teared up that I knew professionally or publicly was, when the door swung open, my bride-to-be started walking down the aisle, and I started sobbing. Now, she thought, what in the world have I done?

It was one of those challenging moments, many in our marriage. Okay? But some of us are more emotionally wired than others, right? God thankfully gave me a wife that is kind of a green-eye-shade girl.

[26:04] Everything's kind of putt, putt, putt, putt, and very clear. We have different struggles. What the author is saying is, listen, you have to have a conscious and deliberate decision that you are not going to be snared by sin.

Don't tell me, I can't help it. Have you ever said that? I can't help it. That is not a Christian word in relationship to sin.

It is not. Why? Because our Redeemer has delivered us from the bondage that we were in, and He has given us a new heart, and He's given to us the blessing of the indwelling Spirit, and we can rely upon Him to help us not be snared by Satan.

Agreed? I don't care what the battle is. There are conscious and deliberate things you can do to help you in your journey and dealing with the problem of sin.

Let me give you a couple of just practical ones. Do you know how Jesus handled sin? He relied upon scriptures that He had memorized ahead of time.

[27:31] Are you aware of that? So if you find areas in your life of recurring conflict and struggle, and you're tired of failing in those areas, and the bitter consequences of having to deal with, Father, forgive me, or your wife or your children or whatever, here's the thing to do.

Go ahead and memorize. Grab about four or five different passages that really resonate with your low-life soul and begin memorizing them so they stick, and when you begin kind of bumping over into the guardrail of that problem, you begin saying, it's time to recite those out loud.

Ever watch Tim Knoyer walk through Walmart in the summertime? You'll sometimes... Don't go behind me, just so you don't embarrass me, but I'll be reciting some Bible verses out loud because

of the context and environment.

Nobody understands what I'm talking about, but let you know. Okay? There's a good reason why I know so many verses about the tongue. There's a good reason why I know so many verses about anger.

So if you want to deal with this problem of sin that entangles, start packing the head with Bible verses that you can hold on to.

[28:54] Secondly, in relationship to that, there is nothing that helps so much as being in the Word of God and corporate worship.

Just the arena of companionship and gospel pursuit of holiness is important. We need each other. Don't disconnect.

And have the integrity when you are struggling with sin of letting other people know that you're struggling. Can I say that again slowly? When was the last time you said to your wife, hey, I've got to tell you, I am really struggling with an attitude towards Bubba.

Come and ask me who Bubba is afterwards. Don't ask. But go ahead and admit that you're having a problem and you want people to pray for you, right? So it says here, we're to lay aside these sins that tangle us up and cause us to fall.

We come to the most important part. Looking unto Jesus, who is 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 God.

[30:15] I've got to tell you that the list of champions and testifiers to faith in chapter 11 is nothing in comparison to the person of Christ.

Do you understand that? That's just kind of a little appetizer. It's just kind of a reminder. Now we come to the main event and the most significant focus that the believer is to have, looking unto Jesus, who is the author and finisher of our faith.

I'll say it. I would encourage you, it's more expensive than I'd like it to be, but there's a good book by Paul Washer called Christ Supreme.

Someone look it up and shout it out, would you please? I'm not going to be bothered. I only preach here occasionally, so go ahead. It's by Paul Washer. It's about Christ.

So go ahead and say it out loud. It's worth it. And if you buy it and don't like it, I'll buy it back from you. How's that? I mean, it's a, you don't lose. Pastor, do you have it there?

[31:20] He's looking. Thank you, Pastor. Okay. What? The Preeminent Christ? Yeah, it's a good book. I just finished it this morning. It is phenomenal. Okay.

Looking unto Jesus. Now, the passage that tells us that we are to run goes ahead and tells us that we are to run this race looking unto Jesus.

And the way in which it's phrased in the text tells us that this is a particular activity. It's not one of just kind of a casual glance.

In fact, the word that is used here talks about making a conscious and deliberate decision to look away from one thing and focus distinctly and narrowly on another thing.

I do like weddings. And while everybody, the doors swing open and the bride comes in and the mother of the bride stands up and everybody turns around.

[32:22] Do you know what they're watching? They're watching the well-prepared girl come down the aisle. Oh, lovely. I never watched the bride. I always watched the guy.

Do you know why? He is the epitome of a man with a narrow, distinct focus on one person alone. That's it. He is looking at his wife to be and there is in his eyes an affection and a radiance that I just find pleasure in.

And here's the author saying, look, we're to run this race looking unto Jesus.

Now, can I tell you that when you take your eyes off Jesus, it's a mess, right? Just ask Peter. Remember? If it's you, go ahead and invite me to walk on water and out Peter goes and what happens?

[33:32] He gets distracted by the waves and immediately after that he starts taking on water, right? I got to tell you, taking on a little water is nothing in comparison to the spiritual catastrophes that happen in people's lives when they take their eyes off of Jesus.

Do you understand that? Peter was a fisherman. Worst case scenario, he probably could have swum back to the boat, right? But when people take their eyes off of Jesus, it's an unmitigated disaster.

And here is the author saying to us, now listen, when you run this race, and it's a hard race, it's going to be exhausting. There are going to be people who you ran with that are not running with you anymore.

There are going to be people who will actively discourage you from continuing in your race. He says, but you have to run looking unto Jesus. It's interesting that you stop and recognize that in saying looking unto Jesus, unto Jesus, the writer is telling us that there must be something that we shouldn't be looking at.

one author, Octavius Winslow, made this comment that the most common focus of our hearts is ourself.

[35:10] Can I say that slowly so you don't miss it? The most common focus of our hearts is ourself. And instead of looking at Jesus, we are looking at ourself.

What do other people think about me? Am I receiving the respect and accolades that I deserve? You know, we have nothing but disdain for the wicked old queen who in snow white said, mirror, mirror on the wall who's the fairest of them all, right?

We don't do that, do we? Who among us have not prayed on occasion and thought to ourselves, how do I sound? Meganito.

Who has sung and not thought to themselves? I wonder what people thought. I will tell you, I'm at the age where I don't ask my wife anymore how I did when I preach.

Pastor, are you at that point? I used to come home and how did I do? Just a pathologically wicked thing to ask and my wife was very helpful to make me know that it wasn't a good idea.

[36:32] Octavius Winslow, the person that we think about and focus on the most is ourself.

That's the reason we are so consumed with things that exhaust us. and what the Holy Spirit tells us here is that we are to glue our eyes on Jesus.

How do we see him? How do we see him? I want you to remind yourself that over in 1 Peter 1, verse 8, and here's a Bible verse that I would encourage you to memorize.

It says this, it says, whom having not seen we love, though now we see him not yet believing, we are filled with joy unspeakable, I think I got it wrong, and inexpressible, forget it, but the point is this, is that when we are thinking about Jesus, our hearts, they're just kind of, they well up.

I don't remember when that verse first convicted me, but it was a changing verse in my life because I realized that Tim Knoyer's affection and interest in Jesus did not match that text.

[37:58] And truthfully, that's what launched me into the pattern of reading the Gospels over and over and over and over again. You can't love someone you don't know.

Would you agree with that? whom having not seen you love, though now you see him not yet believing, you are filled with joy and expressible and full of glory.

Does that describe your heart for Jesus? You know, when we get to heaven, the joy of heaven will not be that we're there.

Golden streets, you know, nah. We are going to be in the presence of the Lord. We are going to see him who is our redeemer and our savior and the lover of our souls and we are going to be filled, as it says in Psalm 1611, with joy and expressible, right?

In thy presence is the fullness of joy and at thy right hand are pleasures evermore. Can I tell you? If that kind of ambition and interest and determination does not on occasion resonate in your soul and draw you to long for better things, I wonder whether you know him.

[39:26] Amen. Amen. We can't see him yet physically, but we see him in the word, don't we?

Over in John 5, verse 39, Jesus makes the statement, he said, you know, that the scriptures tell us about him. And in 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18, it tells us that we beholding in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being changed.

I can tell you, if you're here today and you're a believer and you cannot note the change that is taking place in your life, there's a cautionary note with that concern, isn't there?

I'm thankful to say, Tim Kenoyer is not who he used to be, I'm not who I will be. Why? Looking unto Jesus, who is the author and finisher of our faith, the Savior, who for the joy, which I believe is principally satisfying the plan of redemption and the pleasure of his Father, yes, I'm included in that, he endured the cross and he sat down presently at the right hand of the Father.

And do you know what Jesus is doing for Tim Kenoyer today? Do you know? He ever liveth to make intercession for me. As I was driving here this morning, and anybody who knows me know that I don't remember many songs very well.

[41:22] I remember one of our assistants once commented, he says, I've never learned so many new songs and new words to old songs. But I'll tell you this morning as I was driving along, I was just thinking about Jesus and I was thinking, Jesus, the very thought of thee with sweetness fills my breast.

Right? Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Now we come to this and I close.

To preach about Jesus and not draw attention to the truth that he will forever occupy the center place is wrong.

And to not make it clear that those who refuse the offer of salvation that is found in Jesus Christ alone will spend eternity in suffering and judgment in hell.

How can I preach about Jesus and not make the message clear? God sent his son into the world to be the savior to die for my sin.

[42:51] To live a perfect life so that his righteousness could be put over on my account. When God opens the book on Tim Knoyer's life, do you know what he's going to see?

The record of the perfection of my savior. Ha, ha. That's pretty good. I love being able to tell people the gospel makes it clear that you can have all the burden and the penalty of your sins forgiven. Your heart changed. And look forward to seeing Jesus. And so if you're here today and do not know Christ, I would plead with you now is the hour.

Now is the moment. Confess the bankruptcy of your soul and know this, there is no remedy apart from the humility of saying, I stand justly condemned before a holy God and I have no hope of salvation apart from what Jesus did in dying for me and rising again.

And I plead his blood on my account. Preaching is about bringing people to the place of saying yes or no to God.

[44:10] Let's close. Father, not by might nor by spirit nor by power but by my spirit saith the Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen.