

Hebrews 10:19-39 - A Call to Those Who Believe: Faith, Obedience & Trust

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Man, I'm so excited to be here. Let me preempt a question that I know is coming, and that is, no, my wife and children are not here as well. I told Will, I said, I can come, but my kids can't come. He still said he wanted me to come. So for the crowd that's gathering with pitchforks back in the back, he'll just disperse. No riots. I will bring them back soon, and you all can see them soon.

They were sad to not get to be here. People are asking about Florida, and I can tell you two things about Florida. One, you know, the people who come from the Northeast tell us you never have to shovel sunshine. You know, every day you wake up, and it's sunny again, and it's hot. And then the hardest decision you have to make is what color shorts am I going to wear today? Life in Florida really is good. We are blessed to be there, but I'm excited to get to be with you all this morning.

If you have a Bible and you want to open it up to Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 10, we'll be looking at verses 19 through 39. You know, the Hebrews, like the song we just heard James sing, they were desperate people. They were desperate people who needed to be reminded of the gospel just like we need to be reminded of the gospel. They were considered to be historically faithful followers of Christ. They were Jewish people who were living in a really difficult time to be a Christian.

The book of Hebrews was written around the year 70 AD, and if you know your church history, what was happening during the year 70 AD, it was persecution, right? Persecution was the order of the day, and Christians were being abused, tortured, tormented, and many of them killed for their faith.

[2 : 04] And so the call of the writer of Hebrews is stay faithful. If there was one theme to the book of Hebrews, that would be it. Stay faithful to your heavenly Father. So look with me then at Hebrews chapter 10, verses 19 through 39.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from all evil conscience, and our bodies washed pure with water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses died without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses, how much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, vengeance is mine,

I will repay. And again, the Lord will judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggling with suffering, 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. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised. For yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. May God add his blessing to this reading of his word. Will you pray with me? Father, we are desperate people.

We need your grace. We need your presence. We need your Holy Spirit now as we consider your word. Father, would you speak through me? Would you speak despite me this morning? Father, administer the balm of the good news of the gospel to us now. I pray these things in your heavenly son's name. Amen.

[5 : 27] What does it mean to be called? What does it mean to be called? When you think about calling, maybe the first thing you think about is, kids, if you're younger than the age of 30, there used to be a box that sat on the wall in your house, and someone would call you on this. Like, it would make this loud noise, and you'd walk to it and pick it up off the hook, and you would answer it. And the person on the other end of the line, especially if you were in middle school or high school, they might be interested in you. They were calling you because they wanted to have a conversation with you, maybe to invite you to an event, to a relationship, right? Maybe think about calling that way. We have graduates here today, right? And in a couple weeks, all those graduates are going to put on caps and gowns. They will hear a great speech, a few really great speeches. I've sat through plenty of those, by the way. I love you students. I'm not going to miss that part of my job. You'll sit through a speech, and then your name will be what? It will be called. Your name will be called, and you will be declared a graduate, and then you will have a new calling. You will be called a college student, and maybe even called an adult.

Right? Parents, you had a calling to raise your children from birth up until, you know, roughly the age of 18, right, until they graduate from high school. Your calling was to parent them. You have a new calling. You have a calling to still parent them, but to parent them in a new way, to parent them as you usher them into adulthood, right? Calling is that thing which leads us in our endeavors. It's the thing which dictates our behaviors. It's what helps us to arrange our priorities. It's what generally leads us in our life. Dan Allender, who's a well-known Christian author and counselor, describes being in a motorcycle accident once, and he fell on the pavement, hit his head real hard, and he blacked out. And he remembers coming to, and the paramedics were surrounding him, and they asked him, what is your name? That was the first question they asked, and he blanked. He didn't know his name, but he was able to put these words together. He said, I don't know my name, but I know that I'm a counselor. He knew what his calling was. He knew how his life had been prioritized. He knew what he was supposed to do with his life. Calling is that thing which defines who we are. It's what is the charging force in our lives, and it's what leads us to do bold and sometimes outrageous and crazy things. Calling is what leads us to adopt children. Calling is what leads us to choose the field of medicine because we want to help those who are sick. Calling is what chooses us to go into the field of education so that we can help the next generation, or social work so that we can help those who are marginalized and impoverished. Calling is what leads us to sell our house and give the equity to the poor. Calling is what leads us to pack up our family and belongings and move to the state of

Florida to pursue God's kingdom in a new place. It is the external force of God's Spirit working inwardly in us, working in our hearts and our minds and on our affections. The writer of the book of Hebrews is issuing a call. He's issuing a call just like I want to issue a call to you seniors and everyone else here today, and the call is this, believe. Believe. To follow Christ is not going to come easy.

Hebrews, you know that. That's what the writer of Hebrews has told them, but you must believe. You must have faith. You must follow God with all of your heart. For those who believe in Christ, this is what your faith should look like, the writer of Hebrews says. So go ahead and pull out your bulletins. I've learned from my fellow pastors at Seven Rivers that you can never underestimate the power of a good fill-in-the-blank. So get ready to fill-in-the-blanks. Pull out those bulletins, and let's jump in. What does it look like then to be called? To be called to obey?

[9 : 43] The first is this, you must have faith in the great high priest. You must have faith in the great high priest. This is the first, most fundamental part of our call to believe. It's to have faith in another. In this case, to have faith in the great high priest. In order to appreciate this, you've got to

remember the Hebrew audience. Remember the Hebrew audience, I said they were Jewish Christians, and they were very familiar with this idea of priesthood. You know, the offices that Christ fulfilled. The first that we talk about is that he was the king, that he's the leader of God's people. He's the prophet. Prophet is the one who intercedes between God and his people. He speaks on behalf of God to his people. Well, he also fulfills this very important office of priest. And the priest was the one who goes on behalf of God, on behalf of God's people to God. So he represented God's people, interceded between God's people and God himself. So we must have faith then in the great high priest.

The book of Hebrews describes, if you're familiar with it, that Jesus comes from a new line of priesthood. He was a new type of priest. He followed in the line of Melchizedek. Melchizedek was this mysterious guy who appears way back in Genesis 4, and he was described as a priest who was different. A priest who did not have a beginning or end, whose reign was unlimited. He did not have a genealogy. He was separate. He was different from the rest of the priesthood. Well, Jesus is described as being different from the rest of the priesthood that the audience of Hebrews was used to. He was this new priest. The name Melchizedek, which Jesus follows in the line of, literally means righteous king of peace. There was someone new. There was a new priest that was coming. This was important. It was really invaluable because of the work that the priest did. So they were familiar with how the priesthood normally worked and the role of priesthood, who normally filled that role, and how Jesus was different.

But you also didn't know that the work that Jesus did was different. Typically, the way that the priesthood was normally set up, the priest would offer animals, right, offer a sacrifice. Each family would bring a sacrifice, and those sacrifices were what covered for their sins, right? It's what atoned for their sins. It was one particular day, one really important day, and it's described in Leviticus 16. It was a day when all of the sins of the people for the year would be forgiven. That day was appropriately called the day of atonement. Now, listen to Leviticus chapter 16. It says, And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and shall not work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the Lord from all your sins. It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict yourselves.

It is a statute forever. And the priest who is anointed and consecrated his priest in his father's place shall make atonement wearing the holy linen garments. He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary. He shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar. And he shall make atonement for the priest and for all the people of the assembly. And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in a year because of all their sins.

[13 : 16] And Aaron did as the Lord commanded Moses. The day of atonement. The day of atonement where the high priest would go and he would offer sacrifices on behalf of the people, on behalf of himself.

There was blood everywhere. It was a big day. It was a big day where the people of God would gather outside the tent of meeting in anticipation. Anticipation that the priest's work would go as it was supposed to go, that he would complete his work so that their sins could be atoned for. One commentator describes this day of atonement in this way. He says, on that awesome day, the congregation could witness the priest entering the sanctuary. He would enter with a basin of sacrificial blood. They waited anxiously outside the temple while he fulfilled his office within the most holy place. Not until he emerged from the sanctuary was the tension relieved. His return provided assurance that the offering which was made on their behalf had been accepted by God, and a sense of excitement would have overwhelmed them.

There is a particular description of the day of atonement from the year 219 BC, and this is what it says. This is how that day is described when the priest leaves the holy of holies.

How glorious he was when the people gathered around him, as he came out of the inner sanctuary. Like the morning star among the clouds. Like the moon when it is full. Like the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High. And like the rainbow gleaming in glorious clouds. Like roses in the days of the first fruits. Like lilies by a spring of water. Like a green shoot on Lebanon on a summer day.

[15 : 11] Like a vessel of hammered gold adorned with all kinds of precious stones. Like an olive tree putting forth its fruits. And like a cypress towering in the clouds. It was this beautiful picture, right?

This joy, this excitement that the priest's work was done. But what was the problem? The problem was that the next day happened. The next day happened because they were still sinful people, right? The day of atonement was good for the sins of the previous year. On day one, the account was going to start to go in the red again, right? The work of the priest was enough for the past year, but it wasn't enough for the future. Look again at this quote from the day of atonement. And this time, picture what it's like if Jesus was the one who was the great high priest.

Picture that celebration. Can we go back to that? Thank you. Like roses, we got it. Like roses in the days of the first fruits. Like lilies by a spring of water. Like a green shoot on Lebanon on a summer day. Like a vessel of hammered gold with all kinds of precious stones. Like an olive tree putting forth its fruits. And like a cypress towering in the clouds. That's what your Savior has done for you. He saved you eternally. The work of the priest before was temporary. The work of the priest would only cover the sins from the previous year. But Jesus Christ, the great high priest, he didn't go into the earthly tent. Where did he go? He went into the heavenly tent. He went into the heavenly tent and he pleaded before the holy of holies. He said, let my sins cover the people. It was no longer going to be the sacrifice of bulls and goats. The great high priest, the perfect one, was going to sacrifice himself for his people. He was going to give his blood. He was shedding his blood for you. Have faith in the great high priest is the call of the writer of Hebrews. Jesus is the one who interceded on our behalf. He was the perfect sacrifice. He exited the holy place that we might celebrate and rejoice.

He was the one who eternally covered our sins. The book of Hebrews describes it as the veil being torn in two. The veil is torn in two that we might now stand in the presence of the Father. That we might have perfect union with him again. The way of Jesus is called the new covenant, the new priesthood, the better priesthood. Because in Christ's sacrifice, the old system was made obsolete. You now have a new standing with God the Father. Your sins have been forgiven for all eternity. So the call to faith then, the call to faith in the great high priest from the writer of Hebrews is this. Stop living like Jesus's work didn't happen. Stop living like Jesus's work didn't happen. Don't go back to that old covenant.

[18:24] Remember the way that that old Levitical system worked. Jesus's way is better. Jesus's way is perfect. When I was in college, a good friend of mine, my roommate a couple years, his name was Adam, and like most college students, you know, we were prideful about the fact that we could live off of six dollars a week, you know, ramen noodles, and you know, scrape by as best we could. And my buddy drove probably the most beat-up car I've ever seen, like, that actually operates, that's operational. And this car, I wish I could have gotten a picture of it. It was an old Ford Thunderbird, and I think it might have been like a 93, and I was in college, like, you know, in the 2000s, so that was an older car. And when he got it, it had 225,000 miles. And the headliner was all, like, you would get in the car, and the headliner would rest on your head. And the upholstery in the back had been torn up by some dog, so instead of seating four, it could only seat three. And he had this special trick with his CD player to where he would keep a golf tee in his car, and he would have to, like, jam it in and, like, finagle the CD back out of the CD player. There was scratches, it was rusted, it was broken, it was just a nasty car. And I'll never forget, a few years after college, like we hoped, we got jobs and had the ability to earn some money, and Adam bought a new car. I'll never forget him calling me and telling me, man, the AC's running amazing, the leather is all in place, everything's worth, this car is amazing. How did he know that?

How did he know how amazing the car was? Because he knew the way that things used to be. He understood what the old car was like. Now, for the audience of Hebrews and for us, the challenge is this, don't go back to that old car. Why would you want to drive the old car again?

It's obsolete. You don't need it anymore. You have a newer, better way. That is faith in the great high priest. It's resting. It's resting in his finished work, his accomplished work. You can now put your faith in something that is far better, and that is the life, the sacrifice, the atonement of Christ. And what this means is that we can live out our lives, our endeavors, our challenges, and we can most importantly face our shortcomings with a new perspective.

perspective. And that new perspective is this, that your value and your worth is based not on what you do, but on what Jesus did for you. You know, I've encountered a fair number of people in the years that I've done ministry, and I can tell you that those people who are the most unhappy, most unfulfilled, and honestly, the most miserable people to be around are those who live like they have something to prove, but people who are living like they have something to prove. Faith in the great

high priest allows you to free yourself of having to prove your worth, because your heavenly father says that his son covered you. Graduating students, you're going to face new academic and extracurricular activities, which are going to require a lot of you. Do your best work. Do it with excellence. Be diligent, but don't live as if a grade or a sorority or a fraternity will determine your identity. For parents of young and older children, encourage your children. Challenge your children. Push them to grow, but don't live as if their performance will prove your identity. Children are going to fail often more than they succeed. Don't create an environment where they have to achieve a standard in order to receive your love and affection, because that's not how the father loves you. And to young adults, and even to our retirees, where does your identity lie? What is your first love? Is it your dreams and your aspirations of a bright future? Is it pride on the legacy that you've built, on the opportunity that you have now to sit back and look at all of your accomplishments?

[22 : 47] Well, the God of the Bible says something different. He says, you're valued. You mean something to me because of what my son did for you, because of the great high priest. Your standing, your identity, your calling is determined by one thing. If you watched the Masters this year, then you watched the epic fail of Jordan Spieth, right? That's what you probably took away. We're never going to remember the name of the winner of the Masters, right? Because we're going to remember Jordan Spieth's failure. But one thing that I saw with the Masters that I'll remember about this year's Masters was the week before there was a video, maybe you saw it online, it kind of went viral, I don't know. It was a video that went online of Jack Nicklaus. Jack Nicklaus, you know him, the bear. Six-time winner of the Masters. I think I'm not a huge golf fan, Robert. I'm sorry. I don't know that exact number. Six-time winner of the Masters, I think. And there was video that was taken of his car when he was driving into the course for the first time. His passenger had their cell phone going, and they were recording these interactions that happened as he drove onto

Magnolia Lane. Magnolia Lane is that beautiful drive that we all know onto Augusta National. And the video was funny because along just this one road, there were three security checkpoints. And each security guard would start approaching the vehicle from a distance, not knowing who it was. And they would ask for, you know, his paperwork, where are his credentials? And they'd get close, and they'd realize, oh, it's Jack, it's Jack. And it was this, you know, embarrassing but funny moment for the security guards. And that was interesting to watch. But the best part of the video was this. At each security checkpoint, he would explain to them, you know, hey, I'm here, good to see you, whatever. But at each security checkpoint, he would tell them, he said, I'm here, but then behind me, in the car behind me, is my son. And he doesn't have any credentials. And they would look at him, every single one, without any hesitation, and say, wherever you go, he gets to go too. He doesn't need credentials because he has your credentials. He has what you earned.

Jack, you were the champion. Your son can do anything he wants because he has your championships, because he's a necklace. Brothers and sisters, you have the atonement of Christ. You have that great reward. You didn't do anything to deserve it, but it was still given to you out of God's great love.

[25 : 22] So we are called to have faith, to have faith in the great high priest, that he gives us his inheritance. The second thing we're called to do is to obey. We are called to obey from a transformed heart.

If you want to keep filling in those blanks. We are called to obey from a transformed heart. After concluding what was six chapters in the book of Hebrews about this idea of the priesthood of Christ, the writer of Hebrews stops here at verse 26, and he offers a pretty sober warning.

It's a sober warning to not deny the work of Christ. It's a warning to those who would cheapen the priesthood of Christ by what the writer calls deliberate sin. The intent of the author is to call them to action in their faith, to call them to obedience. Christ died for you so that you might have a transformed heart, a transformed heart which produces obedience. His warning and reminder to us is this, that the sacrifice of Christ, it spared you from the wrath of God, but it doesn't mean that the wrath of God goes away. The sacrifice of Christ covered you, it spared you from the wrath of God, but the wrath of God continues. It continues towards those who walk uncovered by Christ, right?

The wrath of God continues against all those who would deny Christ as their Savior. It's a fearful thing, the writer says, when those who deny the work of Christ encounter the Most High God. Judgment remains. It's complementary to God's mercy and His grace. It's not contradictory. To say that I love my wife, but yet to not come home five nights out of seven, to not work and support her,

to not help and care for our children, to not cherish her and pour into her. If I don't do those things, you might question whether I love my wife, right? Well, to confess Jesus as the Lord of our lives, to say that we love Him, but to continue in deliberate sin, intentional sin, to clear something different about our hearts.

And that's what the writer of Hebrews is saying. It's been preached here so often, Southwood, that we are saved by grace through faith alone, but faith doesn't come alone, right? Faith produces a transformed heart, which produces God-honoring obedience. If you know the book of Romans, the big picture idea of the book of Romans is this, that we are sinners who need grace. There's nothing we could do to save ourselves.

[28 : 02] God gave us Jesus anyway. That's the kind of the first 11 chapters of the book of Romans. And then what does Romans chapter 12, verse 1 say?

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as what? As living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship. It's not your spiritual act of salvation.

That's not what you do to get saved. But because of all the amazing things that God did for you, He now calls you to a transformed heart and life. If you say that you love Jesus, your life must reflect it. That's what the writer of Hebrews is saying. The call of the preacher is to obedience. Obedience from a transformed heart. This is your act of worship. I've been serving in Citrus County, Florida, for a pretty short time, but I can't tell you the number of stories that I've heard from retirees. We have a lot of retirees in our community. And the story basically goes like this. I scrimped and I saved. I watched my 401k like a hawk. I prepared for every single detail. And now I can rest comfortably. That's at least what they thought when they came to Citrus County, Florida. They settled into their neighborhoods and they went to go look for a church and they found one that was preaching this message.

And they realized that the gospel was sounding a whole lot different than it had before. These 65-year-old people look me in the eyes with tears and say, I wasted my life until today.

[29 : 50] My life was a waste. I am now free from the bondage of my own kingdom. I'm free from the bondage of my own 401k and what the world says about me. I am now called to obedience. I now get to live a life that is transformed. It's radically different than my previous 65 years looked. And I can't wait.

We have 65-year-olds to 90-year-olds who participate in capital campaigns. Capital campaigns for our church and our school, the three most recent of which, all of the money has gone towards our school.

We've put it towards building new buildings, building athletic complex, and our retirees are so excited. Retirees who will never have a single child or grandchild enter the campus of the school. But yet they're so excited because they get to invest. They get to invest in the next generation and the children of God's kingdom because they know that their life can't look like it looked like before. That now their whole world is turned upside down because they're living with a transformed heart. I have the same kind of conversation with 30-year-olds too. 30-year-olds who have told me they've tried to fill their lives and compensate for their insecurities through infidelity, through drug and alcohol abuse, through fishing, through hunting, through sports and hobbies, and then Jesus met them.

[31 : 24] And they realize that any other life besides a life of obedience is wasted. The gospel calls you to your one true love. God loved you so that you might love him.

So we are called to faith in the high priest. We are called to obedience from a transformed heart. And lastly is this calling. We are to trust when suffering is required. We are to trust when suffering is required. The message of these final verses is basically this. When you decide that you're going to hitch your wagon to Jesus, you are giving up a life of comfort. You're giving up a life that's dedicated to yourself, to your own pleasures and desires. The road of sanctification in Christ, the writer of Hebrews tells us, is filled with suffering and hardship. This is where we can't soft pedal the calling of the Christian life. This is where the rubber meets the road. Because suffering will come. Hardship will arise. Challenges will be plenty. And what do we expect after all? What else would we expect when the two big endeavors of the Christian faith are to work out sin in our own lives and to push back the kingdom of darkness? Of course it would be hard, right? Because we live in a broken world. We live in a dark world. And we're dealing with hearts that dwell inside of us that are so sinful and so dark. But the calling of the Christian life is to push back the kingdom of darkness and to work

out the sin in our lives. As a part of my role at Seven Rivers, I'm getting the chance to work a lot with young families. And as I work with these young families, you know, I try to ask intentional particular questions. Questions that hopefully allow us to have honest conversation. And so there's one that

I like to ask of families that I get to know. And there was one dad in particular that I was with. Just a few weeks ago, we were watching our kids play on the playground. And I asked him this question. I said, man, isn't parenting like one of the hardest things you've ever done? Like, I hope to be disarming with that question. Like, this is really hard, isn't it? And he quickly just right back at me said, no, man, parenting is awesome. It's amazing. I love every minute of it. Well, what he didn't know was that his wife was standing about four feet behind him. And if looks could kill, he would have dropped dead. Because she heard him. How could you say that, she thought? How could you say that when I'm dealing with dirty diapers and sleepless nights and temper tantrums? It's because he's an absent dad. He's not there. He's not in the trenches with her. And so I've come to realize with this dad that he needs to get used to the motto that if parenting isn't hard, then you're probably not doing it right.

I think the writer of Hebrews is telling us the same thing, that if following Christ is not hard and difficult, then you may not be doing it right. You may not be diligent enough in working out the sin that dwells in your heart. You may not be diligent enough in going out into the world and pushing back the kingdom of darkness. The call to us is to follow Christ even in the hard and difficult places. Maybe you're in a sweet season. That's great. That's awesome if God has given you that. But he doesn't promise you that. He doesn't promise you comfort. He doesn't promise you wealth or fame or riches. But he does promise you this, that you're going to have to die to yourself.

You're going to have to die to your own kingdom. Those who have faith in Christ have a perspective, though, which is different, right? A perspective which is different than the rest of the world. And we have hope. We have hope that the rest of the world doesn't know. It's why the Hebrews were able to, what does the text tell us, accept the plundering of their property with great joy. I get mad if my kids like put a scratch on my car, but the people in Hebrews were accepting the plundering of their property with great joy. How is that even possible? It's possible because of the heavenly reward. It's possible because of what God promises us in heaven. And he says, don't take your eyes off of that. Don't take your eyes off of my son, off of those promises. Many of you, you know my kids, you know Lila, our oldest. She has lots of allergies. And so we found an allergist now in Central Florida, and we're excited about that. But we knew what it meant finding a new allergist was new testing.

[36 : 11] She's going to have to have testing done all over again. And she's a trooper. She does really well with testing. She's pretty good with needles, having blood drawn shots, all that sort of thing. Well, what we didn't anticipate about this testing was they were going to do multiple panels on her back. But to do it, they had to lie her down. They had to lie her down, and they surrounded her. The nurses surrounded her and held her down. And her head had to face the wall. The testing was awful.

It was horrible. She was writhing in pain. She was screaming, and she was crying. She wanted it to end. But the hardest part was that she couldn't see us. She couldn't see her mom and dad. Because that's what gives her hope. That's what gives her strength. We told her, baby, you've got to have this testing done. But we're right here. We're right here. That's the promise of the Father. I'm here. I'm present with you. Keep your eyes focused on Jesus, even as you face great suffering. Do not fall away from the faith.

The road may be rocky, but you have a Savior who has redeemed you. If you were to flip just one chapter later from our text this morning, you would find one of the most famous verses of the book of Hebrews, maybe in all of the Bible. Hebrews chapter 12 says this, Seniors, parents, beloved, the call of faith is a call to a race. A race which will require great endurance.

But you're running a race that's already been completed. It's already been won. And it was won by Jesus, the author and the perfecter of your faith. You rest in the promises of God fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Jay Scalar is a friend and seminary professor of mine in Wills.

He's been in this pulpit before, and he shared a story with us once in class. And it was a story of a race that he ran. He was kind of a novice runner. He'd run a handful of 5Ks every year. And there was one particular season in his life where work was difficult, home life wasn't great. He and his wife were having challenges in their marriage.

[39 : 06] And he was feeling the weight of suffering. And he described how in a lot of races what people will do is they will put their names on their shirts. They'll put their names on their shirts so that the people who were cheering can cheer for them by name, right?

Well, this one particular season of his life, he decided he'd do something a little different. And instead of putting the name J, he put the name Christian. And so the entire race, as he was struggling with doubts and fears, he heard what?

Good job, Christian. Keep going, Christian. You're almost there, Christian. Christian. You can do it, Christian.

And he crossed the finish line in the back of the pack. And he saw his wife who realized what he had done. And she went and she wrapped her arms around him.

Said, Christian, you finished. The race is over. That's the promise of the writer of Hebrews, is that your reward is in heaven.

[40 : 16] There's going to be a second calling. A second calling is going to be as your father ushers you into heaven. And he says, I love you. You did it.

You finished the race. Have you heard the call of God in your life? Are you willing to respond? He has great promises.

He offers great hope. And he offers a life abundant. For all those who believe. Pray with me. Father, we await that day.

We await that day when there will be no more mourning or crying or tears. And where you will welcome us into your loving arms.

Only because of what Christ did for us. Father, will you seal us in those promises. Will you encourage us in those promises. Help us to believe that good news even as we face dark and difficult days.

[41 : 21] Father, I thank you for these, your people. For your word. And for the hope, the joy, the promise that it gives us. Pray these things in your heavenly son's name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.

For more information, visit us online at southwood.org. Once upon a ■■■ that night, we will be forced to die. www.rightfield.org. For more information, visit us online at 74.6.

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