

# God will never give you up

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[ 0 : 00 ] So, if you'd please turn to Hosea, chapter 11 and 12. Chapters 11 and 12.

So, we're going to read the first nine verses of chapter 11. And then we will read the first six verses of chapter 12.

Not the first six. We pick it up in verse 2 of chapter 12 because that's actually the natural break. Verse 1 of chapter 12 really ought to be at the end of chapter 11.

So, now hear God's word. When Israel was a child, I loved him. And out of Egypt, I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away.

They kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk. I took them by the arms, but they did not know that I healed them.

[ 1 : 24 ] I led them with cords of kindness, with bands of love. And I became to them one as who eases the yoke on their jaws. And I bent down to them and fed them.

They shall not return to the land of Egypt. But Assyria shall be their king because they have refused to return to me. The sword shall rage against their cities, consume their bars at the gates, and devour them because of their own counsels.

My people are bent on turning away from me. And though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all. How can I give you up, O Ephraim?

How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Adama? How can I treat you like Zibayim? My heart recoils within me.

My compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger. I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God and not a man.

[ 2 : 32 ] The Holy One is in your midst. And I will not come in wrath. Verse 2, chapter 12. The Lord has indictment against Judah.

An indictment against Judah. And will punish Jacob according to his ways. He will repay him according to his deeds. In the womb he took his brother by the heel.

And in his manhood he strove with God. He strove with the angel and prevailed. He wept and sought his favor. He met God at Bethel. And there God spoke with us.

The Lord, the God of hosts. The Lord in his memorial name. So you, by the help of your God, return. Hold fast to love and justice.

And wait continually for your God. God. Well, as we come to it, we'll cover, of course, both chapters fully.

[ 3 : 35 ] But that gives you the temperament of what both chapters are about. That God will never, cannot, will not give his people up.

And we'll come back to the message of that after this next hymn. Well, please, if you make your way back to Hosea 11 and 12.

Well, we've come to the part in Hosea where it seems as if all the bad news is over.

And God has had to deal with his people in measured ways. And we saw last week that when God deals with his people, it is measure for measure.

And the illustration that we used was why did God's people end up in Babylon for 70 years and not 60 or 30? Or to the point where they would repent and believe.

[ 4 : 51 ] Why 70? And we realized that that was the amount of Sabbath years that they had broken regarding the land. They had overworked the land instead of leaving it to rest, one every seven.

And they did that for 490 years. And so 490 divided by 7 gives you 70. And so God took his people into captivity for 70 years.

It was a measured response. His judgment on them equaled their sin against him. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. It wasn't God didn't go further, but it was very measured.

But now we come to the point where God has disciplined his people. He has put measures in. And God at this point proves and demonstrates and states that he will never give up his people.

He will never give you up. If you belong to God, the greatest assurance that you have is God will never give you up. Now this is different than saying that God will not give up on you.

[ 5 : 56 ] Or as you might say to someone else, well I won't give up on them. And the difference is a very subtle difference but an important one. And that is when we say to someone else or we want to see a change in someone else, we may say I'll never give up on you.

You may have this problem. It could be a drink problem. It could be a gambling problem. It could be a number of different issues. And you may look at that person and say, well whatever the case may be, I'm never going to give up on you.

But when you say I'll never give up on you, you recognize that you are powerless to help them change or to make them change. And so there's a great assurance there of being able to say to a person, I'm never going to give up on you.

In other words, I'll always be there. But even though I'm always there, there's not much that I can do to help. When God doesn't give his people up, he's not saying I'm going to stick around until you change.

He says I'm sticking around in order to change you. And that's the key difference between us and God. Our limitations are not God's limitations.

[ 7 : 10 ] And so we may stick around in the hope that people will change. God sticks around in order to change. So that we can become different by virtue of having God deal with us all the time.

And God has dealt with his people very patiently. He has put measures in to stop them drifting any further than what they have. Then he put different measures in to bring his people home entirely back to him.

And in both cases, whether it be a bed of thorns or walls or whatever measures God chose to make it uncomfortable for his people to continue in sin.

And yet easy for his people to come home. Whatever measure or state his people are in. They are always being loved by God.

Now ultimately, they don't get to experience what we have. They don't get to see exactly how God changes a person. We saw that this morning. That salvation is the way God changes a person.

[ 8 : 16 ] And the ultimate goal of the gospel, of course, is not salvation. But to the praise and glory of God. We're going to be able to participate in the table this evening. Where we remember the very thing that changes us.

Christ giving his life for us. And so the way chapter 11 and 12 fits together before we get to this good news of God. Or that God has for us.

Is to remember that the emphasis here is on the fact of just how much God is going to demonstrate that he loves his people. And the way that he demonstrates it here is by bringing them home.

These are wayward children. You know, this is a real encouragement, I think, to all parents who have children. And whose children don't always do what the parent wants them to do.

Well, if you've been reading Hosea carefully. What you've been reading about is God having children of his own, Israel. He raises them with children in love.

[ 9 : 18 ] And they're completely wayward. And yet, he's the only one who can bring them home. He's the only one who can bring them back. And this is the source of absolute encouragement.

Especially within covenant families. Where you hold to this idea of God's covenant regarding family life. And so it's much better for Israel to come home.

And to start over. Even if they have to start all over again. Right back at the beginning. Than to not come home and not start over. And sometimes, we tend to think that there's too much water that's passed under the bridge.

Or I just don't want to go through. I don't want to go back to the beginning. I'm bigger and wiser now. And yet, that could be the very stumbling block of any future change.

The fact that you think that you're further down the road with God than what you actually are. And so there's no real momentum or movement forward. Because where God sees that you are.

[ 10 : 20 ] And where you see that you are. Is entirely different. And so to start all over again. Whatever age you are. Is what God would have you do.

If you're not in the place where you ought to be. So it doesn't matter how much water is passed under the bridge. It doesn't matter how much sin has been committed against God.

There is the opportunity here for you to start all over again. Right now. Right here. Right now. And walk close and clean with God.

And so the lessons are easy to understand. But they're incredibly hard to learn, it seems. And that's where the difficulty comes in. There's nothing here that is difficult to understand.

The difficulty is in the fact that we cannot do it. And the reason for this is because sin lies.

[11:16] The deceitfulness of riches lies. Idolatry lies to us. And the basic principle that we've at least tried to visit time and time again.

Is love God and use things. Love God and use things. Don't love things and use God. And yet too often idolatry is summed up in that exchange.

Where we love things and end up using God. And one of the ways that we use God. Is like God's people here. They're in trouble. And every time they're in trouble. They ask God for something.

Well of course they ask him for something. Because they need it. But when they're out in the deceitfulness of riches. And their pockets are full. And they're heading out of town.

Or out of the home into town. Then of course there's no praying then. Because they're living under the deceitfulness of riches. Everything seems to be fine.

[12:17] No one goes bankrupt on day one. And so no one seeks to turn back to God on day one. And if you've got enough money. And you've got enough riches. Then no one seeks to turn back after a week or after a month.

It all depends on how much of that idolatry. How many of those things out there that you're still able to hold on to. So God wants you to use things.

He wants you to enjoy the world that you live in. He wants you to enjoy food. And drink. And holidays. And hills. And valleys. And the water.

And painting. And flowers. And gardens. He wants you to enjoy all of that. He wants you to use all of it. But he wants you to love him first. And the way God's people go wrong is the same way they always go wrong.

They just make the simple exchange between loving things and using God. When all they have to do is love God and use things. But here God's people are loved by God continuously.

[13:20] And then stray into. Because they have everything. When they're with God they have everything. And then they stray into areas where. Well we don't have that. Right.

But you don't have that because you have God. And of course in straying. They stray away from the blessing of God. So here's the sort of summary as it were of chapter 10 and 11.

Israel are described as growing up as a child in the home. Verse 1. And God loves his children. And the whole idea here of describing Israel as a child.

Is to reinforce the idea that God is a father. So if Israel is the children. Then God is their father. Verse 1. When they're at home.

God is the one who taught them how to walk. Verse 3. So God. Here we have the picture of God bringing his people up. And then of course in verse 4. He brings them up with bands of love.

[14:16] And the best way to imagine this is like toddler rings. That you brace your child in as he begins to walk. Whereas they begin to walk. And as they fall. They don't fall and hurt themselves.

Their legs may give way beneath them. They may trip over a stone. But because they are reined into your hands. Those bands of love. As you were. Their cords of love. They fall. But they don't fall to any harm.

They are kept from falling. And so that's the image here in verse 4. That God's people are being brought up. By God. As children. He's loving them.

He's teaching them how to walk. He puts reins on them. So that when they trip and fall. They don't trip and fall to the point where they damage themselves. And then ultimately. God is the one who bends down.

At the end of verse 4. And feeds his children. God is coming down to man. He is luring himself to feed you. To look after you. And to love you in this way.

[15:15] And yet as these children have grown up. It seems as though. They've treated all of these blessings. As though. They're entitled to them. And so they begin to.

Move away from the home. They begin to go out into the world. And they are bent on turning away from God. At every junction. It would seem. Verse 7.

My people are bent on turning away from me. And though they call out to the most high. He shall not raise them up at all. So here's the exchange. They have gone from a people who love God and

use things.

To now loving things and using God. When they're in trouble. When they don't have money in their pocket. They're phoning home. Can you pay my debts please?

Can you get me out of this trouble? Can you. And this is just a familiar story to many families in the world. Where the children don't realize how blessed they are living in the home.

[16:15] And the moment they go out into the world. They realize just how much hard work it is. And they get themselves into a little bit of debt. Or a little bit of trouble. And the phone gets picked up.

But it didn't get picked up a couple of months ago. When it was your mom's birthday or your dad's birthday. That was forgotten about. But what isn't forgotten is. Now I'm in trouble.

And now I need to. Now I need to phone up. Because. The whole idea of sinfulness is it makes you self-centered. And that's exactly what God's people have become. They're away from home.

They use God. Because they love things. Can you help me? Can you. I've enjoyed myself out there in the world. Can you pay my debts please? And that's the situation that they've got themselves into.

But what God does in looking upon their situation. Is that God looks upon his people. And he cannot give them up. He cannot hand them over.

[17:14] In fact verse 8. It even says that his heart recoils within him. Even the thought of letting his people go. Even the thought of handing his people over.

He just can't do it. There just becomes a great deal of turmoil. In the heart of God. Even at the thought of handing you over. And just leaving you alone.

God isn't saying to you. Well you made your bed. Now go lie in it. God doesn't want to do that to you. Now he's saying come home. Come home.

And come home now. And of course. God in his heart recoiling. Gives us the reason for why his heart recoils. And this is the very central bit here in verse 9.

The reason God will not let you go. And the reason God will not judge you. Is because God is God and not man. Halfway through verse 9. That's the reason why God doesn't let you go.

[18:17] Is because of who he is. And the fact that he is not like us. God is God. For I am God and not man. And then of course God being God brings his people home.

As we then move into chapter 12. We begin to realize that Israel must learn from their past. They must remember how they work with God.

And they must remember how they went wrong. It all began with Jacob. Jacob is the one who grabs his brother by the heel even in the womb.

Jacob means deceiver. He knows what he's doing. And he's good at it. But he's simply out for his own ends. And he as you know deceives his brother out of the birthright blessing.

And I've actually spoken on why he does it. When he must have known that the father thought he was speaking to the other brother. Why would Jacob seek to hear the blessing from his father when he would have known that his father thought he would have been saying it to his other brother?

[19:26] What meaning could it actually have? And I've addressed that in times past. And I don't really have time to do it again this evening.

But of course Jacob then got old. And he then is wrestling again. Now he's wrestling with the angel of the Lord. Now he's wrestling with God. And he's wrestling to the point where he is seeking the favor of God.

I will not let you go until you bless me. And of course God blesses him. But he is left with a limp.

And of course this then develops and we have the nation of Israel.

And we have God's people who then just have a life of wrestling with God continually. And then as Israel grew older, as they developed, as they prospered, they moved into what's called the poverty of affluence.

That though they had much, verse 8 of chapter 12. In other words, the position that Israel have got themselves into is they think that their safety is in their wealth.

[20:45] But God is pointing out that there's a great poverty and affluence. And you only have to look at the world to see that, you know, only this last week, this what?

There's like the report was given that over 17,000 people in the UK alone have hit the affluent stage. Which is having more than 23 million pound in the bank.

If you've got that, you're well off apparently. But there's great poverty. There's 17,000 people in the UK with that. There's many more thousands around the world.

But God looks upon that and sees great poverty. Because what that wealth keeps people from. And in many cases, God can give a Christian huge amounts of wealth.

Of course he can do that. God's got nothing against making Christians incredibly wealthy. There's nothing wrong there. But there's the great poverty that comes with affluence.

[ 21 : 45 ] Which is that they become spiritually void. There's no spiritual blessing. They have nothing that is a blessing of any kind.

They have a spiritual poverty before God. And so God continues to speak, verse 10 of chapter 12, through his prophets. But they don't listen.

They just don't listen. And this is the central problem for all Christians, even today. All of God's people have always struggled with listening.

And it's not that God hasn't spoken to us. And we may find it amazing. How can we commit a sin when we know in the Bible it says, don't do that?

We've heard it. We've heard it preached on. We've listened to it. And yet here we go and do the very thing that we've not listened to. We've heard it. But we've not really taken it in.

[ 22 : 43 ] And so God's people always find themselves not wrestling with the world, which is what they think they're doing. They're actually wrestling with God. They're not wrestling with money problems.

They're not wrestling with health issues. They're not wrestling with marriage issues. None of these things are up. They could be sinful situations. But at the end of the day, what's really being wrestled with is God.

God wants everything to be beautiful and good. And in salvation, that's what it becomes. But everything is wrestled with. And everything ultimately is wrestled with God.

Because whatever we're dealing with in life, we're always dealing with God. So the central reason, the central reason for why God will not let you go, verse 9, is because God is God and not man.

When you experience great love, and I mean really great love, it can sometimes minimize the sin, at least in other people's minds.

[ 23 : 51 ] That a man can forgive another person many things, but not necessarily all things. We may think we can until it comes to the point where we have to.

And then we realize that our thought, what we thought about our forgiveness of others, is not quite as great as what it actually is when we actually have to come and do it.

And so when sin exists between two people, and great love is not present, or at least God's love is not present, then sin wins every time.

People give each other up. They give up on each other, and they give each other up. Relationships breaks down because sin says, walk away.

And so sin always seeks to destroy. God's love always seeks to deal with what has been destroyed and stop things from being destroyed.

[ 24 : 53 ] And whenever you witness great love in another person, or especially God's great love towards us, it can sometimes at least look as if it's minimizing the offense.

And so someone asked the rhetorical question, how can you forgive that? How can you forgive that? And yet people have, and it's amazing.

And what happens when a person says, how can you forgive that? What they're focusing on is the sin. What the other person is focusing on is the fact that the value of what love should be able to do.

And so there's two ways of looking at the issue. You can either look at the sin, or you can look at the love. But what God's love does is it does not minimize the sin as if it's no big deal to forgive you. Because God is forgiving, and God always forgives, we can sometimes think that it's not a big deal for God to do that. God is God, he's not man.

[ 25 : 57 ] It's not a big deal for him to forgive. It's not a big deal for him to love, because God is God and not man. And yet, for God to forgive, he has to give his life for you.

That sounds like a big deal. For God to actually forgive, to actually love, he has to give his life. So the idea of God's love being sort of isolated to the fact that God is able to do it because God is God, and therefore it's no big deal, makes no sense whatsoever.

Because in order for God to love in the way that he does, in order for God not to let you go, he has to let go of his own life. He has to lay down his own life.

So it is a big deal. It's a very big deal. So when we read this verse, For I am God and not man, we are not to think, like a child does, well, God can do anything because he's God.

Therefore it's not a big deal, because God can just do it. It is true that God can just do it, because he's God. But understand the value of what you're receiving. It happens to you.

[ 27 : 08 ] You are not let go, because God gives his life for you. And that is a big deal. So the reason why God doesn't give his people up is concentrated solely, ultimately, finally, in him.

And when God's people themselves commit themselves to idols, and they think that they are safe in their wealth, and they only see what they have done from their point of view, then that is when you don't consider these things to be big issues.

When a person sees sin only from their own point of view, then they don't see how great God's grace is.

Because we don't think it takes much to solve. When we understand sin from God's point of view, and we understand it fully, then we can understand what it means for God to give his life.

But when we only understand sin from our point of view, we can sometimes think that it doesn't require that much, as though we might be tempted to think that this particular sin I commit doesn't require Jesus to die on the cross.

[ 28 : 28 ] And yet all sin requires Christ to die on the cross in your place, so that God doesn't give you up. So the moment we begin to see these sins from our point of view, we lose sight of the greatness of God's grace.

We lose sight of what it actually means for God not to give you up. We lose completely the idea of what it means for God to love you in the way that he does. The moment you see sin only from your tiny point of view, you lose just what a big deal it is for God to give himself to you.

The human point of view gets in the way of truly appreciating and seeing what God has actually done for us. The reason why God doesn't give you up is because he's God and not man.

It is man who gives up on man. Men and women can walk away from men and women. It's easy to walk away and start a new one somewhere else.

It doesn't require any type of mending, any type of restoration. It doesn't require, it may hurt, but it doesn't require any, God never walks away from you.

[ 29 : 43 ] But in order to not walk away from you, in order to not walk away from me, it is going to be incredibly costly and really painful for God to do that.

So again, as we read these verses, I am God and not man, we are not to read them as though it's no big deal for God because he's God. It's not a big deal. No, it's the very opposite.

It is because God is God that he's able to do these big things like take the pain, take the judgment, feel the loss, give his life a ransom for you.

And so as he thinks about this, we've also seen in verse 8 that the heart of God recoils. The reason he cannot judge you is because even the thought of judging you makes his heart recoil.

Verse 9, his heart is in absolute turmoil at the fact that he has to judge you. He has to do what is right. He has to hold himself to his holy standards.

[ 30 : 45 ] But when he thinks about judging you, he can't do it. His heart recalls within him and it recalls within him because he's God and not man. And so the question is never, what will you do for those that you love?

It's rather the other way around. You will do exactly to the measure of your love. You will not do anything for another person if it's beyond the measure of which you love them.

You will not do anything greater than the measure of your love. And sometimes we think we can do things even up to the measure that we love a person until it actually comes to it.

And then we realize that the standard of our love is actually lower than what we thought it was once it's put to the test. And so the issue here is not what will God do for those whom he loves.

God will do exactly what he does to the measure that he loves you. None of us go beyond the measure of our love in treating other people.

[ 31 : 54 ] We will treat them to the very measure and not beyond. And so when we consider what God actually does for us, only then will we be able to see the measure of his love for us.

Only then can we get a full grasp of just how much God loves us. What it means for his heart to recall a thought of judging you.

And so when we read this in New Testament terms, this is how we understand it. That God's heart recoils when he thinks of judging you. And then he gives his son to the cross.

When he thinks about you being judged, his heart recoils. Because of his great love for you, he cannot let you go. And now you begin to see just how costly his love for you is. Just what will it cost God not to give you up? Just what will it cost you for you to be forever God's? And God looks down upon this situation in which he knew before time and realizes, I have to give my son.

[ 33 : 03 ] I have to give my son. It's either, either I give my son or I let you go. Either I give my son to the cross or I let you go.

And the thought of letting you go, God's heart recoils. The thought of judging you, God's heart recoils. And so he gives his son.

So God's judgment doesn't disappear. It simply moves from you to him. God gives himself. He takes his own judgment. And that's the New Testament understanding that we have.

The beauty of being able to fully appreciate what it means for God not to let, not to give you up. So we are to look back and learn and then we come to this exhortation.

And as we look back and learn before we come to the exhortation, the lesson, again, is simple but not necessarily easy to learn. Why do people make the same mistake over and over again?

[ 34 : 07 ] You ever wondered that? Most of you will know that my mom is divorced and remarried several times. And I asked her the question one day. I kind of knew the answer.

But I thought I would ask her the question anyway to see if she knew the answer. Both the relationship between me and my mother is slightly different simply because I was the eldest son and so I tend to treat my mom more as an equal than a mother.

And that's simply the product of years and years of being treated like a father to my younger brothers. I took on responsibility that, well, it doesn't matter.

But I'm now in a position where I look at my mom and don't first see my mom. I see someone that partnered with me with looking after the other children. But I can remember once sitting down and asking the question, why do you think you married so many men that were so much like the man before?

Why did you do that? Why did you marry a man that would get drunk and beat you up, divorce him, and then marry a man that would get drunk and beat you up? And then do it again.

[ 35 : 20 ] And so it took me years to be able to sit down and ask myself the question, why does that happen? There must be a reason. We can't just pass this off as though it's no big deal.

There must be a reason for why this thing, why that kind of pattern happens. That my mom would marry the same type of man that she divorced because he got drunk and beat her up, only to find six months into a new relationship the same thing was happening.

How is that the case? And you begin to realize that when you read the history of God's people with God, why we make the same problems over and over again.

And it's because of this. Sin blinds you. It blinds you. You only ever see the results, but you never actually get to see what caused the problem in the first place.

And so the reason God's people make the same mistake over and over again, the reason they commit the same sin over and over again, is because the very sin that they commit actually stops them from learning what caused them to commit that sin in the first place.

[ 36 : 29 ] It blinds them to the decisions that they made in the first place. Sin removes all spiritual discernment. Idolatry is a means of giving your life for freely to death.

It's sort of, you're committing spiritual suicide in idolatry. You're just laying yourselves down and all discerning and all, any position of being wise is completely gone.

And so the reason God's people commit the same sin time and time again is because how can they learn from something when they don't know where they went wrong? The reason you commit the same thing time and time again is because you're blind to learn from the thing that you committed. You don't see where you went wrong and so you do it all over again. And that's what sin does to a person. And that's why you can have a woman that marries the same type of man over and over again because in the moment sin blinds you to those bad decisions, to those type of choices and it just happens and we're the same here this evening.

We tend to think that we know where we went wrong and then we do it again and think how did we do that? How did that happen? How did it go so wrong all over again?

[ 37 : 55 ] It's because we don't know where we went wrong. That's why we're going wrong again. So here's the exhortation as we close. It has become increasingly clear throughout the whole book

of Hosea just how God works with his people.

Just how he looks after you. He never lets you go. God is like a father or a mother holding a child's hand as they walk across the road when the child doesn't want to hold on.

And the reason why God holds on so tight, the reason why the parent holds on so tight is because the parent doesn't want something worse happening to their child like letting go and getting knocked over by a car.

And so at that stage where the father or the mother is holding on to the child's hand and the child is trying to struggle away because it wants freedom, the father knows that your freedom is actually potential danger.

If I let you go there's cars out here, there's trucks, there's heavy things that can knock you over and bring your life to an end. And so what you immediately see in a situation like that is that both people are struggling.

[ 39 : 08 ] Both people feel the struggle but for entirely different reasons. Okay, both people feel the struggle but for entirely different reasons. God feels the struggle with his people because he's trying to keep them safe.

He holds them tight and he feels the struggle of holding them tight. Not that it's difficult for God but the struggle's there. And yet the children feel the same struggle but for an entirely different reason. They want to go. They want to run. They want to be free and run and have a great time. And so there's a struggle between man and God and it's the same struggle felt by both but for totally different reasons.

God holds on tight not so much to hurt you but so that something worse doesn't happen to you. In the same way a parent holding onto a child's hand crossing a busy road.

If our focus here this evening was simply to focus it from Israel's point of view, it would be like looking at it from the child's point of view who feels that mum's holding my hand too tight.

[ 40 : 16 ] It's unnecessary. Let go. I don't need it. If we read this as simply points of view then one point of view would be this. You don't have to hold on to me that tight.

But if we read it from God's point of view then we read oh yes I do. This is why I have to hold on to you as tight as what I am because you are bent on running away.

You're bent running out. You're bent on running out into a busy road. And that's what God's people have done and will do if God doesn't hold on to them. So there are two different points of views here but the same struggle.

And the same struggle is felt in God's people wanting to go one way and God deciding not to let his people go. He will not let them go.

And so there's a struggle there. Because they're wanting to go. When we know and we enjoy what God has actually done for us in Christ Jesus only then do we begin to see that all of that struggle that God has with us, again not that it's a struggle like we know it, is because he doesn't want us to run away.

[ 41 : 31 ] It's because he is holding on to us. That God is the one who really does give his life for ours. That that's what his love means. That I will give my son instead of letting you go.

I will give my son instead of letting you go. Now we can be driven and tossed around by sin but it is God's love that anchors us to him, the rock that cannot be moved.

We will not escape because God's anchor is steadfast and sure. It keeps us right where he is. And now God's patience causes us to feel when we come back to him and the struggle's over just how much time I've wasted.

Now that I've stopped fighting, now that all my energy has gone from the struggle and I finally come home and I finally come back to God and I find myself praying again and I find myself reading his word again and enjoying fellowship with others of God's people, then there's a guilt that sets in for how much time I've wasted.

I look back on the things that I'm now ashamed of as Paul puts it in Romans. The patience of God is what causes us to see at a point just how much time we have wasted.

[ 42 : 49 ] And so I finish with this as the key reminder that we belong to a God who can raise people from the dead. And this means that we can never call any situation dead and buried.

We can never look at a situation and go nothing good can come out of that. We can never look at a situation and go it's beyond restoration. It's beyond repair. We belong to a God of resurrection.

He can raise people from the dead. And here we are looking at lesser things thinking there's no way God can do anything about that. There's no way anything can be done about that. And yet we belong to the person who raised us from the dead.

That's the first key thing and here's the second. There is here not only a source of thanksgiving but an absolute assurance of hope for all those who once walked with Christ but don't now.

As I read this I can think of all of my friends that I know who walked with Christ and who currently don't. And if this is true that God isn't going to let them go. All those friends that I grew up in church with that when they turned 18 and 19 they disappeared or even before that.

[ 44 : 04 ] If this is true that God's not going to let them go then they're just God's not let them go. And that for me and hopefully for you that is a great source of encouragement. We don't want to minimize that God is sort of willy-nilly as it were over dealing with people.

If he doesn't let them go wherever they are he has not let them go. It's simply that different people different children come back to him at different times. And that's the God we belong to.

Amen.