

Hebrews 12:14-29

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[0 : 00] into the 12th chapter and says, so then since an invitation remains, isn't that good? Since you are invited to live this type of faith as well, let us run with endurance the course or the race that is set before us.

So the author reminds us opening up in Hebrews chapter 12 that the life that Christ has called us to is not a life of short spurts, but it is a life of enduring marathon. It is going to be a life of commitment. And then he closes out into this 12th chapter. We're going to close it this morning, Hebrews 12, starting in verse 14. And I want you to see this morning what a reoriented life of obedience looks like.

A reoriented life of obedience. Yes, I've already given you my title. I normally don't give that until after we read the text. But I want you to see this morning what a reoriented life of obedience looks like.

So if you are physically able and desire to do so, will you join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God with one another, starting in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 14.

[1 : 03] The author says, Pursue peace with all men and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble and by it many be defiled.

That there be no immoral or godless person like Esau who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected. For he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched, and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and a whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words, which sound was such that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them.

For they could not bear the command, if even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned. And so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I am full of fear and trembling. But you have come to Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, and to the general assembly and the church of the firstborn, who enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkling bud, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

See to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from him who warns from heaven.

[2 : 25] And his voice shook the earth then, but now he has promised, saying, yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven. This expression, yet once more, denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken as of created things, and so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God in acceptable service with reverence and awe. For our God is a consuming fire. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word this morning, and we thank you for the opportunity which we have to read it together. We pray that as we have read it, Lord, now that you would help us to come to an understanding of it.

We pray that its truth would grip our hearts and minds, and Lord, by the power and presence of your spirit, that you would help us to come to a greater understanding of who you are. Lord, that understanding would lead us to a greater commitment and devotion to following you in obedience, and we ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. I want you to see this morning what a reoriented life of obedience looks like, because as the author has extended the invitation to enter the race of faith that is set before them, he has shown us what the life of faith is looked like on display in other people, and while we

may understand that it is imperfect people who are full of mistakes and full of faults, yet their faith is acceptable before God, and therefore they find acceptance, we also don't want to make faith and belief a crutch to live life however we want to, because on the hills of that, we have the numerous warning passages throughout the book of Hebrews that warns us as to how we will respond and what our life will look like.

[4 : 12] We have before us this morning the very last warning passage found in the book of Hebrews, and it is really that set of verses at the end of our section this morning. But what I want you to see is that those who are running a faith, running that race of obedience or that race of faith, have reoriented their life or therefore changed their life not to fulfill rules and regulations, don't do this, do that, keep this day holy, make sure not to eat this food, make sure to only do these things, don't walk so far on the Sabbath.

Well, you say, well, I'm not Jewish, those things don't apply to me, right? But we put other things in the blank, right? Be a good person, give enough money to the church, say your prayers, read your Bible, make sure your family tree is okay, do better than the most, right?

Don't be as bad as some, those things which we seek to do to find approval before God. Yet the Bible says by the works of man, no one will be forgiven.

So that means that nothing we could ever do would ever find forgiveness before God, no work, but rather it is faith. But that faith leads to a reoriented life, right?

Because true salvific faith changes what we do. It is not what we do that makes us acceptable to God, but the reality that we are accepted before God changes who we are.

[5 : 35] It changes how we act. It changes how we behave. It reorients our life from rebellious self-preservation, self-motivation, self-working, to reoriented life of disciplined obedience to what Christ has called us to.

And I want you to see three things from our text this morning. Number one, we see the effort which we employ in this life of obedience. The effort which we employ, look at verse four, pursue peace with all men.

Now we have went beyond just our faith towards the Lord our God, our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, to that which our faith will lead us to do. Some parts of biblical texts are so hard, even in their simplicity, right?

Think about this just for a moment. Maybe this doesn't have the effect on you that it has on me, but it sure has this effect on me at times. Listen to the simplicity. Before we break it down and try to make it, give a clear interpretation, just look at what it says in its plainest form.

Pursue peace with all men. There's really nothing else we need to add to that. To pursue means to push forward and to put great effort into.

[6 : 51] It is not to sit back and hope things will be peaceful. It is not to sit back and hope that somebody will come and be reconciled to you. It is not to sit back and think, oh, hopefully everything will go. It is a pursuit.

It is going after something. It is seeking to go fulfill something. Now, this does not mean that you will be at peace with all men because the Bible very clearly tells us to live peaceably with all as much as depends upon you, but it means that you will be pursuing it, okay?

And sometimes, I just speak from, you know, our own times here, our own testimonies, that we understand that we cannot live peaceably with all, but if it depends upon us, we must live peaceably with all.

We must at least be pursuing to live peaceably with all men. Now, we would rather it say, if we were to be honest, we would rather say pursue peace with all those who are of the same faith as you or pursue peace with all those who are just like you or pursue peace with all those who act like you or pursue peace with everybody who sees things your way, but it doesn't.

It says pursue peace with all men. Now, the author of Hebrews is writing to people who are scattered around the Roman Empire. I don't know if you know much about the Roman Empire.

[8 : 03] The Roman Empire was pretty good. It was pretty good in its progress. It was pretty good in its, you know, they had the Pax Romana, which is called the Peace of Rome, so they wanted to maintain peace, but I don't know if you know a whole lot about what the Roman emperors did to believers, right?

Some of them, for sport, would keep pools of piranhas and throw Christians in there when they were having parties. Some of them, for sport, when they wanted to light their parties up, would put

tar around Christians while they were alive, bind them to a stake, and set them on fire to light their parties as they were getting ready to have a meal of fellowship.

There was great torture that was going on. Nero and all of his craziness, all those things that were going on, blamed the burning of Rome on Christians, which led to the greater persecution of the faith, which is why a number of the Christians left Rome and ended up being dispersed throughout the rest of the Roman Empire.

We understand these things, but the author says, pursue peace with all men. All men. This is reorienting our life because our life would say, I'll be peaceful with those who are just like me, but that's not what it says.

This is an effort, and we just acknowledge this. We admit this. This is not easy work, right? But because of who Jesus Christ is, because of what he has done for us, because of the efforts and the risk he took in forsaking his glory and living in our world, bearing my sins, and because of the extent that he did that I may be at peace with God, the Bible says, pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

[9 : 43] So we are to pursue peace, and we are to pursue sanctification. Now, sanctification is a big word. It literally means to be set apart for holy service. So if something is sanctified, it is set apart for holy service.

I'll give you a pretty good example. Okay? Not that necessarily the giving of tithes and offerings is a holy service, even though, you know, it is a holy thing because Paul says on the first day of the week, set aside some of your increase and give it for the benefit of others.

But let me just ask you a quick question. What if I went home tonight or this afternoon, and I left here, and I wanted to have me, I don't know, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with some Dorito potato chips, and I brought this plate to have it.

Some of you internally right now are having a fit because you would not want me to sit down and put a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in this offering plate and to have Doritos all over it, and I can just, it's got this thing in the bottom, I can wipe my hands on it if I get anything in it.

So that's not right because this thing has one purpose, right? It is something that has been set apart for the service of the church, something that means something to the church.

[10 : 41] So in the church's eyes, this is sanctified. Okay, it doesn't mean it is necessarily holy, but it is sanctified. It is set apart. And it is to be set apart for holy service. You have to be careful with offering plates and offertory tables.

Some of you know, one time when I went to go preach in Utah, and their pulpit was so small, and their platform was so high, it was literally even with the table. And I have a bad habit of walking around without preaching.

You probably haven't picked up on that yet. But as I was walking, I was stepping towards it. The congregation, be careful with these kids. We start clapping in here, and you get carried away. Your pastor may get excited because in that congregation, there were Haitians.

There were people from Japan. There was an old man from Texas. And we had a good blended message going on. And it was getting a little glory hallelujah in there. And I got excited, and I went to step off the platform to get closer to the congregation, and I put my foot on the table, on the communion table, okay?

And I was about to step out on it because I thought it was part of the platform too. I caught myself thankfully before I knocked everything off. But anyway, that was sanctified. Don't step there. So I put that mental note in myself, right?

[11 : 49] Don't step there. But this is what we see where it says, the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. Because here's the thing. When you gave your life to Jesus Christ, and he paid the price for your sins, you are redeemed.

That means you are bought. He has paid the price of redemption. Redemption means that you are on the auction block of sin. The bid was going on. Satan was putting you up for sale. And the sin that wanted to trap you and ensnare you was bidding on you.

Someone showed up at that auction and said, I'll give my life for them. Satan said, I don't think they're worth that much. And he said, I do. And that life is Jesus Christ. He redeemed you. He bought you. He purchased you with his blood.

You are not your own anymore. And what he did, the moment he purchased you, is he sanctified you. You are set apart for holy service. Okay? He bought you for a purpose.

You are redeemed for a reason. He set you apart for his work. You are no longer for your own benefit. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, and I'm getting a little carried away in this, but it's okay. The Bible says, at the moment you are saved and redeemed and forgiven, you are given a spiritual gift.

[12 : 51] And the spiritual gift that he gave you is for the benefit of the body. Ephesians 4 and following. 1 Corinthians 12 and following. Actually, it's 1 Corinthians 11 and 12 and following.

He gave you a gift for the benefit of the body, which means, I'm going to tell you this. This is going to blow your mind just a little bit. He redeemed you and set you apart for holy service to be used inside the local body called the church.

Right? That's what he did. That's why the local church is so important. He set you apart. But now, Jesus has already set you apart, but it is our job to be pursuing that sanctification.

It is our job. We are already sanctified, but we must be pressing on towards greater sanctification, which means, Jesus didn't create robots, so he didn't go in and change your hardwiring.

He didn't go in and reboot your program, right? He didn't go in and reset everything. You still have, after you're forgiven, after you're redeemed, after you're purchased by the blood, you still have the same struggles, still have the same temptations, still have the same trials, all the tribulations, and you still have an enemy.

[13 : 54] As a matter of fact, you have an enemy who's fighting harder than he ever has. So what you have to do is you have to fight back. And you have to say, no, no, Satan. I'm pushing towards sanctification because Christ bought me for a purpose.

He redeemed me and set me apart, and I want to be sure I am doing that which he set me apart for. I want to ask you, just real simple, are you putting forward that kind of effort?

Are you saying, I'm pursuing peace and sanctification because without me being set apart, I'll never see the Lord. So he's already set me apart, so this is my ticket. Now look at what it says.

Not only speaks to that effort, the effort we employ, what we're doing there, but also that effort is inclusive of the body. I know I'm a little bit long-winded in this, but it's inclusive of the body. It says, see to it that no one comes short of the grace of God.

See to it. One of those see to it passages, right? Which means, it is therefore our, this isn't written to pastors, by the way, this is written to believers, not just to pastors.

[14 : 58] It is the believer's responsibility to make sure that no other believer or no other member of the body is falling short of the glory or the grace of God. That means they're not taking the grace of God lightly.

They're not taking the grace of God lightly. They're not casting it aside. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble and by it may need to be defiled. This is, again, the believer's responsibility to preserve the unity of the body of Christ.

You ever see a root of bitterness growing up inside the body of Christ in your life, in the life of a brother or sister in Christ? Call it out. Because many fall away because of that.

This is the efforts. It is the maintaining the unity and the peace and the security of the body. And he gives an example. He says, because you don't want any immoral or godless person like Esau.

Why was Esau immoral and godless? He sold his blessing. His birthright was a blessing, okay? The blessings in the Old Testament are a big deal, right? They're huge deals.

[16 : 02] It is a spiritual blessing and it is a physical blessing. He was to be the priest of the home. He would have that blessing bestowed upon him. And he got hungry one day and his brother was sitting here cooking a pot of stew and he said, I could care less about my blessing in the future.

I'm hungry now. Why was he godless in the moral because he wasn't looking for the eternal, he was looking for the temporal? See, that's when we look at Christ and we say, I could care less what eternity is going to be like.

I want to be satisfied now. Now. He says, see to it that there's no one like that because he says, even after, as though he sought it with tears, there was no place for repentance.

Couldn't come back. So here's the effort we employ. Number two, the position we enjoy. I'll make my way very quickly through these last two. Hopefully I'll do them justice, but the position we enjoy.

The reason we employ such efforts, the reason we go to such extent is because of where we're standing.

Do you know where you're standing in Christ? Look at what the Bible says. For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched into a blazing fire into darkness and gloom and a whirlwind and the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them.

[17 : 09] What's he talking about? Old Testament text, the giving of the law. Mount Moriah or Mount Sinai. They're at Mount Sinai in the book of Exodus and God comes down. The glory of God covers the mountain and it's dark and it's thundering and lightning and peals of thunder and flashes of lightning and blaze and smoke and they hear God speak and they say, oh, that's too much.

We can't hear him. He's too powerful. So what we see in Mount Sinai is the law. The law is the giving of the Ten Commandments and what it is you should and shouldn't do. It is all these regulation, rules and regulations which many of them were trusting in.

Now the law was a place of separation. God said, you stay over there, I'll stay over here. He said, don't touch the mountain. If anybody touches the mountain, even a beast touches the mountain, we're going to stone it. Right?

Don't touch it. Holy. This mountain is holy. You can't touch it because I'm here. So it is this place of separation. There's a gap that you cannot come between. There's this division and there's this fear and this trembling and this horror of the fact, as a matter of fact, the voice of God was so awesome. The people begged Moses to go up there so they didn't have to listen to it because God was too big. And so we can't stand it. We can't do that. So it's this place of separation and division and fear and trembling.

[18 : 23] He says, you didn't come there. In Christ, you don't come to a place of dread and a place of separation. But what does he say? He says, but you have, in verse 22, you've come to Mount Zion.

Mount Zion's a reference to Jerusalem in the Old Testament, but it's also, I mean, it's a reference to not only Jerusalem, but also to the city of God. Oftentimes, listed as a picture of the church.

You've come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to myriads of angels and to the general assembly and the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven and to God, the judge of all and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.

So yes, you're not standing at the place where God's presence is manifested and you can't touch it. You're welcomed into the city where the judge of all is there, but not only is the judge there, because look at what it says, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.

So now we've come to a place of acceptance, a place of welcoming, a place of mercy, a place of grace, a place of forgiveness. I believe it was Warren Wearsby who said that there was a pastor in the south many, many, many days ago and he had an older lady who sat on the front pew and as some of the old times would do, the pastor would get carried away and the older lady, they kind of get to talking back and forth.

[19 : 49] They get to talking back and forth and she'd kind of feed him on like, come on pastor, you know, none of you would ever do that, so that's okay. But he got on this passage and he got a little carried away in this passage and he was preaching through this passage and the old pastor said, we've come to Mount Zion and the lady said, yes pastor, we've come to Mount Zion.

He said, to the city of the living God. She said, yes pastor, to the city of the living God. Pastor's getting excited. He probably had a towel wiping his head, you know, he was getting tore up there. He said, it's the heavenly Jerusalem of the redeemed of the first one.

She said, yes pastor, yes pastor. He said, to myriads of angels and she said, yes pastor. He said, and we don't deserve to be there and she said, no pastor because the mediator's there.

We deserve to be there in Christ. See, don't get lost in the splendor.

We don't deserve to stand on the mountain of the law but we have a right to stand in the city of God because not only is the judge there but so is Jesus the mediator of a better covenant and that's the position as believers in Jesus Christ we stand in.

[21 : 00] That's the position that we hold on to. We are in his presence and it's a place of rejoicing. Look at what it says. It is a place where the general assembly of the church of the firstborn are enrolled in heaven and the spirits of the righteous are made perfect.

Righteous just means to be in right standing with God. There will be a day because of Jesus Christ I will be made perfect. It's not today but there will be a day. What a glorious position that we enjoy.

Now let me take you to this third thing the warning that's extended because this is the final warning of the book of Hebrews. Because we must be putting forward such effort to find our lives living in obedience because of where we're standing in Jesus Christ we're standing before the presence of glorious God of all.

We're standing around this myriads of angels and the general assembly of the firstborn in the church we're standing there with all the saints of old and we're standing before him then it says careful see to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking.

How did the book of Hebrews open up? In latter times God spoke to us in various ways but in these last days he has spoken to us through Jesus Christ his son.

[22 : 19] Hebrews chapter 1. God doesn't speak through crowing roosters anymore he doesn't speak through burning bushes he doesn't speak through donkeys he doesn't speak through clouds and thunder he doesn't speak in any of these things we saw in the past he doesn't speak through prophetic utterances as he did through Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Haggai and all those other Old Testament prophets he speaks to us through his son Jesus Christ.

Now where is Jesus at? seated at the right hand of the Father right? So see to it that you do not refuse him who is speaking for if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth that is Moses came down from the mountain and said this is what God says if you don't do it you know I told you if there's one book of the Bible that I would never make it through it was the book of Leviticus remember I told you that?

For those of you that were with me on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights I told you I'd never make it through the book of Leviticus we preach through it and by make it through it I mean live through it because by the time we got to Leviticus chapter 5 I found something that I would have been guilty of and been stoned to death because the theme of the book of Leviticus is holy holy holy right and here's the rules and regulations and Moses said if you do this you're going to be stoned if you do this you're going to be stoned if you do this you're going to be stoned if you're going to do this you're going to be stoned and when I look at my life I said man I would not have lived very long in ancient Jerusalem or ancient Israel I would have died that's the point of the Old Testament by the way to show us that if you can't refuse him who's speaking from the earth why do we think that we can take lightly that which we hear from heaven because if that which was on earth bears authority how much more so that which is in heaven how much less will we escape to turn away from him who mourns from heaven and his voice shook the earth then when God spoke on Mount Sinai the earth was shaken but now he has promised look at what this says saying yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens that's an Old Testament prophetic word that will be fulfilled in some time this expression yet once more denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken as of created things so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain that's a good way of saying listen what God's going to do is he's going to shake everything up we went through the book of Revelation last year and we've seen how he does this but this is one thing that we need to understand this world that we're standing on is really shaky ground

I don't know if you've caught on to this but everything around us seems to be falling apart everything around us seems to be falling apart no matter what any individual has trusted in in the last five years I would dare say at some point that thing started to crack a little bit because everything that this life has to offer you is shaky ground and God says I'm only going to let it stand so long because there's going to come a time where I'm going to take everything man is trusting in his work his effort his riches his rewards his security all of the things he's trusting in and I'm going to shake it up and the reason he does it is because he wants him to know this isn't good what you're standing on is not going to hold you up he says he's going to shake it look at verse 28 therefore since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken that is the kingdom of heaven that is the kingdom that Christ calls us to since we have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken friend listen to me everything around me may crumble everything around me may fall apart everything according to this world standard may fall out from under my feet and I may look like a loser according to the world but as I trust in

Jesus Christ I know that no matter how bad it looks in the world's eyes it's not going anywhere in eternity's eyes because it cannot be shaken this earth has tried the battles and the principalities of this world have fought against the kingdom of heaven and they have never succeeded no not once therefore since I have received the kingdom which cannot be shaken let us show gratitude why do we live lives of obedience not to find acceptance but to show our gratitude friend listen when Jesus

