Press On In Faith

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Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0:00] Welcome to Built on God's Word, the preaching and teaching ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.! Pastor Mike Scrivani preaches on Hebrews 10, verses 26-39.

Would you stand with me as we honor the reading of God's Word? Again, Hebrews chapter 10, verses 26-39.
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 dies 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 trampled underfoot the Son of God and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has outraged the Spirit of God?
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.
[1:18] But recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.
Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised.
Forget 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 those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. May God have a blessing to the reading of his word.
[2:17] Would you please be seated? Our mission statement at Highland Park Baptist Church is that we exist to develop disciples of Jesus Christ, to delight in him and demonstrate his goodness as we declare his gospel to our neighbors and the nations.

Our hope is that we here at this church would be those who are like the good soil that Jesus talked about. The gospel takes root in, and much fruit is produced for his kingdom and for his glory.
Jesus told the parable of the sower in the soils in Matthew 13. He used seed to symbolize the gospel and four different kinds of soil to illustrate four different responses by those who hear it.
Matthew 13, 3 through 9, Jesus told them many things in parables, saying, A sower went out to sow, and as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.
Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away.
[3:39] Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew and choked them out. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

He who has ears, let him hear. Later on, Jesus' disciples ask him why he spoke to the crowds in parables. Jesus answers them, and then in verses 18 through 23, he tells them what the parable of the sower in the soils means.
Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart.

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This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. Yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among the thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it.
[5:03] He indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty. Some of the original recipients of Hebrews were at risk of becoming like that second type of soil that Jesus described.

They were Jewish converts to Christianity, and their confession of faith in Christ resulted in persecution, as chapter 10 verses 23 through 34 indicate.
For identifying with Christ, they endured a hard struggle with sufferings. They were publicly mocked.
They were pressured to deny their faith in Christ. They suffered the plundering of their possessions, and some of them were arrested and put in prison for believing in Jesus, for confessing him as their Lord and Savior.
For a time, they faced this persecution and this pressure joyfully, recognizing that such opposition from the world was not unusual for followers of Jesus, but rather an expected outcome of their faith in Christ.
[6:31] Jesus told his disciples in John 15, 18 through 20, if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own, but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.
Why did the world hate and persecute Jesus? In John 3, 16, Jesus told Nicodemus that God so loved the world that he gave to them his only son.
But just a few verses later, Jesus tells Nicodemus how the sinful world responds to God's love in John 3, 19 through 20.
And this is the judgment. The light has come into the world, and people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.
[7:48] For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. Instead of loving God for exposing their sins, they hate him for it because they love their sin.

They love being their own authority, their own determiner of right and wrong, and they're offended that the sin they love so much is offensive to God.
There has never been a time in the history of the church when Christians were not persecuted for their faith. The original recipients of Hebrews understood this.
For a time, they all accepted persecution as a result of their confession of faith in Christ, and they did so with joy because persecution identified them as belonging to him.
However, as time went on, as the hard struggles and sufferings for being identified with Christ continued or perhaps maybe intensified, some members of this church began to drift away from their confession of Christ and were in danger of turning away from him.
[9:23] The writer of Hebrews knows this. It's what's prompted him under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to write this letter to them. Thomas Schreiner, New Testament scholar, said the aim of this letter, the aim of Hebrews, is to provoke readers to persevere.

In chapter 10, verses 19 through 25, the writer of Hebrews summarizes all the doctrines that he's expounded on throughout this letter. He has demonstrated from Scripture that Jesus is God's divine Son, that he is superior to angels, to Moses, and to all other Old Testament figures that the Jews revered.
He's shown from Scripture that Jesus is the superior high priest offering himself as the ultimate and final sacrifice for sin, who has fulfilled everything commanded under the old covenant.
Through his superior blood, he has inaugurated a new covenant that by faith in him and in him alone our sins are completely, permanently, and totally atoned for.
We are forever forgiven in Christ. Our hearts and our consciences are cleansed of guilt. He has established a new and living way through his flesh, granting us access to the throne of God's grace,

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which we may approach boldly in our time of need.
[10:56] After preaching these doctrines, the writer of Hebrews called his readers to fulfill their duty as born-again, Holy Spirit-filled disciples of Jesus.

They are to hold fast to their confession of Christ with hope and without wavering, stirring one another up to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together for worship, as had unfortunately become the habit for some of them.
Our text today comes on the heels of that exhortation. I believe that the primary reason the original recipients of Hebrews neglected gathering with their church for worship was fear of persecution.
At one time, they endured such trials faithfully and joyfully, but over time, some began to drift away from the church because they were drifting away from Christ.
Returning to Judaism seemed a safer path, allowing them to avoid these struggles and sufferings that were a result of being persecuted for their confession in Christ.
[12:14] However, this drift was spiritually dangerous. Some had moved so far from Christ that they were at risk of completely turning away from Him.

While this might have spared them of earthly persecution, it would result in eternal consequences for them. The writer of Hebrews issues a warning here, and he does so to encourage them to prompt these believers to press on in their faith in Jesus.
And so the main idea for this morning's message, persecution should prompt you to press on in your faith in Christ, not turn away from Him.
Persecution should prompt you, Christian, to press on in your faith in Christ, not turn away from Him. In our day and in our time and in our place, we have constitutionally protected rights to assemble and to worship.
You didn't come to worship this morning worried that you would be arrested for gathering with other believers to worship the Lord.
[13:31] However, we find ourselves in a culture that is increasingly hostile to the gospel and is exerting an increased amount of pressure on Christians to conform to their worldview and abandon a biblical worldview.

Business owners are regularly targeted and sued for holding biblical convictions about marriage.
We've seen high school teachers that have lost their jobs for praying with their players before and after games.
We've seen teachers who have faced demotions or termination for declining to refer to boys as girls and girls as boys in the classroom.
Christians have been denied permits to use public spaces for worship gatherings. We've seen some Christians arrested for standing outside of abortion clinics encouraging those mothers to keep their babies.
The persecution Christians face in our culture, in our nation is certainly not as intense as it is in other nations, especially Muslim nations, but it isn't insignificant.
[15:02] In secular spaces, Christians are increasingly pressured to keep their faith private.

As opposition grows and persecution intensifies in our culture towards our faith, we must decide, will we shrink back in fear or will we press on in faith in Christ?
Vodibachum said, persecution can be avoided. All you have to do is compromise. As we'll see in our text this morning, to compromise with sin is to turn away from Christ.
To neglect meeting with other believers in the church is a dangerous thing because, as we see in our text, it's the first indication of one who eventually turns completely away from Christ.
So we need to take this warning to heart, both for ourselves and for others in our church who have confessed faith in Christ.
[16:14] There are three promptings in our text this morning to press on in faith and not turn away from Him. Our text this morning, again, contains both a word of warning for Christians and for unbelievers.

But it also gives encouragement. If you do not believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, God has ordained this day for you to hear this warning and I pray that you will heed it and seeing your desperate need to turn to Christ and salvation.
The first prompting comes from verse 26 through 31. It's the peril of forsaking Christ. It's a fearful thing to fall in the hands of the living God.

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The peril of forsaking Christ. Verse 26 again says, for if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.
Now, as Christians, we must use Scripture to interpret Scripture and interpret the Scripture that we're reading in its original context.
[17:32] The Bible says that when someone is saved by God and comes to faith in Christ, trusting in Him to forgive them of their sins, cleansing them of all their sin, that they are born again.

John 3.3. They are a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5.17. They have received a new heart with new desires to obey the Lord.
2 Corinthians 5.9. Romans 8.5-6. They're no longer slaves to sin, but slaves to righteousness. Romans 6.16. They have come to know the truth in Christ, and that truth has set them free from the eternal penalty of sin.
John 8.32. However, the Bible says that until a Christian reaches glorification, they still battle their sinful flesh in this life.
They experience the same conflict that the Apostle Paul wrote about in Romans 7.21-23. There he said, So I find it to be a law that when I want to do the right, evil lies close at hand.
[18:43] For I delight in the law of God in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

When Christians do sin, when they habitually commit the same sin, and the Holy Spirit exposes that sin to them or to someone else who confronts them about it, they're grieved.
They're ashamed. They repent. They don't come up with excuses. They don't act like their sin is just not a big deal.
Either instantly or eventually, they acknowledge their sin and they ask God to forgive them for it. In repentance, that sin their flesh delighted in becomes a sin they desire to kill with the help of the Holy Spirit.
Romans 8, 13 through 14 says, For if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.
[20:07] If you have heard the gospel and professed to be a Christian, yet deliberately and willfully persist in sin, believing it to be compatible with the Christian life, and then when confronted, choose to withdraw from gathering with other believers because they refuse to excuse your sin, you are placing yourself in grave danger.

And understand this, you are not being persecuted, you are being disciplined. And there's a big difference. But that path leads towards apostasy and ultimately the rejection of the true Christ of Scripture.
years ago before the Lord called us to Highland Park, I preached a sermon on Romans 1 about the wrath of God towards unrighteousness and those who suppress the truth.
I did what I always hope to do when I preach, explain what the text means, support its meaning with other scriptures and encourage people to believe what God's Word says and obey what God commands.
At the end of that sermon, I'd always stand at the back of the sanctuary and I'd shake everybody's hand on their way out and one gentleman, a prominent member of our congregation, shook my hand and he put a note in my hand.
[21:59] Later, I went back to my office and I read that note which basically said this, this is the last sermon I'll ever hear preached about God's wrath towards this particular sin and you'll never see me here again.

Later that week, this church member emailed me article after article written by other pastors who supported and condoned the sin the Bible explicitly condemns.
his point was to me, other pastors agree with me and since they're pastors too, who's to say that you are right and they are wrong?
In our culture, you do not have to look hard and you do not have to look long to find someone with the title pastor who contradicts scripture and challenges the words that God inspired through the Holy Spirit.
There's a man, there's a pastor named Adam Hamilton who's running for senator in my home state of Kansas and he recently said that the apostle Paul in scripture got some things wrong.

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[23:35] I've recently heard another pastor say that Jesus sinned when he compared the Canaanites to dogs. It's not hard to find someone with the title of pastor who will condone the deliberate sin that people refuse to repent of.

But they're condoning it, they're blessing it, I don't care who they are and I don't care how many degrees they have, it doesn't make it right.
God commands pastors, shepherds to rightly interpret, not reinterpret his word for culture. Reinterpretations are misinterpretations.
It doesn't matter again what title they have or what degrees they have, anyone who contradicts God's word is not a shepherd of God's sheep, they are a wolf dressed in sheep's clothing, which Jesus warned about often.
Those who deliberately persist in sin are in effect rejecting both the gospel and the Savior it proclaims. The one who offered his life on the cross as a sacrifice to set us free from sin, not to grant us license to sin freely without fear of consequence.
[25:00] In verse 27, the writer of Hebrews warns about this consequence. Again, he says, but a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

The terminology the writer of Hebrews uses here comes from Old Testament scriptures. He's repeating words of warning that God had already spoke in Zephaniah 3.8 and Isaiah 26.11.
Zephaniah 3.8 says, God speaking, for my decision is to gather nations to assemble kingdoms to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger, for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.
Isaiah 26.11. O Lord, your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it. Let them see your zeal for your people and be ashamed. Let the fire of your adversaries consume them.
Listen, God is not doing a new thing. He doesn't change. He tells us that in Malachi 3.6, James 1.17.
[26:14] He has not and he will not change his mind about sin and about his righteous judgment against it. No matter what anyone thinks or says to the contrary, if you are not in Christ, you are in sin.

Sinning deliberately and unrepentantly against our holy God is a very, very terrifying, fearful thing. Those who choose to go on sinning deliberately, even though they have received the knowledge of the gospel, are in truth actively rejecting Christ.
As verses 28 and 29 say, anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse the punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has outraged the spirit of grace.
Here the writer of Hebrews uses a lesser to greater argument as he warns his readers who have drifted away from Christ and who are in peril of turning away from him.
Every Israelite under the old covenant sinned by transgressing the law and God established for them a sacrificial system to atone for their sins and hold back his wrath from them towards their sins.
[27:52] But Israelites who egregiously deliberately violated what God commanded were sentenced to death on the evidence of two witnesses.

No mercy. No second chance. death. No deferred sentence. No prison sentence.
No insanity plea. Death. That was the earthly punishment for deliberately violating some of God's commands under the old covenant in the Old Testament.
That's bad. bad. But worse is the eternal punishment awaiting those who reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
Those who knowingly and willfully persist in sin after receiving the truth about Jesus commit three grievous actions against him.
[28:59] First, as we read, they trample him under their feet. This word communicates more than just walking over someone, taking advantage of them because they're nice.

It means to crush under your feet. Roman triumph parades, when they would come back from battle and they would bring back all of their treasures and the captives that they took in victory, they would sometimes take those captives, those defeated enemies, and they would push them down to the ground so that the Roman soldiers could march over them, trample them, humiliate them.

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And that's the idea this word pictures. It means to crush with your feet. Those who reject Jesus trample and crush the one who came to crush the serpent's head for them.
Second, they profane his blood which activated the new covenant of grace. In rejecting him, they side with the world against him. They side with his enemies who shed his blood on the cross and they toss it aside as if it is worthless, as if it is common.
Third, they outrage the Holy Spirit through whom they claim to be sanctified. How will God the Father respond to this rejection, to this blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, to this treatment of Christ?
[30:28] Verse 30 through 31 tell us, for we know him who said vengeance is mine, I will repay. And again, the Lord will judge his people for it is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of the living God.

Some people say, and you've probably heard them say this, only God can judge me. And they say that as if God will not judge them, but he will.
He knows your every thought, every thought that you've ever had. He knows the true motive behind every action or inaction.
He will judge in righteousness. Sins committed against an eternally holy God have a eternally fearful consequence.
The only defense that will hold up for any of us, the only hope that any of us have to be spared of God's righteous vengeance is to repent of our sins and turn in faith to Christ who died for our sins.
[31:51] And so I ask you, are you in peril of turning away from Christ? Are you holding on to a sin?

Are you excusing it? Are you mad with God that he would not want that to be a part of your life? Are you drifting away from the church because they're holding you accountable for the sin that you refuse to repent of? I ask you this, when persecution intensifies, will you conform to this world? Will you be fearful of man or will you be confident in Christ? The writer of Hebrews prompts his readers in us by warning us about the peril of forsaking Christ and the danger of apostasy.
In verses 32 through 35, he prompts his readers and us to press on in faith by remembering.
[33:01] So the second prompting, past faithfulness to Christ, which means recalling former days when you endured. Past faithfulness to Christ. Verses 32 through 35 again say, but recall the former days when after you were enlightened you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes 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 great reward.
So here the writer of Hebrews he's warned them of the peril and now he's reminding them of their past to remember the former days which most likely refers to the years soon after their conversion. At that time as is often the case with a new believer they were zealous. Their joy for the Lord was contagious.
They knew that they had gone from death to life. They had experienced the sweet release of their bondage to sin and the unburdening of their guilty conscience.
[34:19] They endured persecution with joy because they were being identified with Jesus Christ their Savior whom they loved. They had compassion for members of the church who were being imprisoned for their faith.

First century prisons were not like the prisons that we have. They didn't provide prisoners with food, water, clothing, or any of the other amenities that prisoners have in our prisons.
And so if you were arrested, you were a prisoner, you were dependent completely on family and friends to meet your needs. These believers were meeting those needs.
But over time, they had become less willing to show the same compassion for those in their church who suffered persecution. What we can discern is that the fire they once had for the Lord was dwindling.
There was less joy in their suffering. And there was a diminished desire within them to endure. And so the writer of Hebrews urges them here to recall their past, to remember their past faithfulness in the hopes that that will be used to rekindle their zeal for the Lord in the present.
[35:47] Looking back to that time, I think also functioned as another warning to them. Look at what Jesus said to the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2, 4-5.

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But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. And here we see it. Remember, therefore, from where you have fallen. Repent and do the works you did at first.
And here we see the warning. If not, I will come to you and remove your lamb stand from its place unless you repent. Remembering serves as a warning to encourage faithfulness in the present.
The word translated as struggle in our text is athletic. Athletic in the Greek from which we get our English word athletic.
The Christian life is also often compared to athletic competition. An athlete endures strenuous training.
[36:57] And in that training, they learn to push through their pain, to push through fatigue, knowing that it's strengthening their body and it's helping them become resilient and have the endurance they need to run well.

Christians endure because they know that whatever loss they suffer in pursuing Christ for following him is in reality gain. We'll see that in Hebrews 12, 1 through 2, but let's look at it now.
Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
In chapter 11 of Hebrews, we'll be next week, the writer of Hebrews turns his readers' attention to the past faithfulness of God's people. They struggled, but their struggle was not in vain and it was not without reward.
He's urging them to press on in this same way. Brother, sister, look to your past. Remember when the Lord was gracious to save you.
[38:25] The joy that you had in him in that moment. your desire to tell everyone you knew about Jesus and what he had done for you to save you.

If you're less joyful this morning, if you're tired of the struggle, if you're fearful of persecution, remember that time when you wanted everyone to know that you knew Jesus.
remember how you felt when the Holy Spirit of God came and indwelt you, saving you. And remembering that joy you felt can snap you out of spiritual lethargy.
If you are struggling with sin that has caused you to drift away from Christ, resist it, combat it, combat it by remembering how joyful you were the moment the Lord saved you from your sin.
He hasn't changed, but maybe you have. And if you're truly in Christ, you aren't any less saved than you were the moment he was gracious to save you.
[39:47] And for you, the application may be at this point, it's just time for you to snap out of it and press on. As verse 35 says, therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward.

But you know what? Maybe you realize that you are the rocky soil in Jesus' parable. You had joy in the Lord at first, but there's no joy anymore.
friend, God has been merciful to you this day to help you to realize that.
And I pray that he is using his word to plow up your hardened heart to be the good soil today that his gospel will take root in and produce fruit in keeping with repentance.
Your life in Christ can begin today. Turn to him. Call out to him. Confess your sin to him.
[41:01] Don't neglect his great salvation. Don't be one who will be in the crowd who will one day hear Jesus say, depart from me. me.

I never knew you. How terrible it will be for those who hear that to spend their eternity in hell hearing those words ring and echo in their ears forever and ever and ever.
Depart from me. I never knew you because you loved your sin more than Christ who came to save you from it, having neglected your only hope for salvation.
So now we come to the third prompting which is to persevere in faith in Christ. Persevere in faith in Christ. Verse 36 through 39.
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.
[42:27] Here the writer of Hebrews quotes the Old Testament again. This time he's quoting Habakkuk. If you've read Habakkuk you know that Habakkuk prophesied about God's coming judgment of Judah for refusing to do God's will.

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The writer of Hebrews picks up that warning as a foreshadowing for his readers for us about Christ's soon return. Jesus will return. And so the writer of Hebrews commands his readers to look back to their past faithfulness to encourage them to look forward in faith to Jesus' soon return. Again I ask you are you tired and weary? Are you fearful of persecution? Are you afraid of the future?
Do you spend more time complaining to God than praising God? Habakkuk repeatedly complained to God about the advances of injustice and the suffering of the righteous that he saw all around him. And God's message to Habakkuk was this. The righteous shall live by faith. The faithful would persevere.
[43:39] The righteous are those who are in Christ. They are saved. They are kept. They will not shrink back because they know who they are and they know what they have in Jesus.

There is a lady in our church in Leavenworth who is faithful to be at our church whenever the doors were open. Faithful to serve, to do it behind the scenes, never complaining about anything.
She was a servant. She loved Christ and she loved her church family. And she was married. And her husband, in the six years I was there, never stepped foot inside of our building.
I had heard that there was a time when he used to come to church, that there was a time when he confessed faith in Christ, but the only time that I ever saw him was when he was in the hospital. And he had been battling cancer and things for him were getting really bad. And so Kathy said, will you come visit my husband in the hospital?
[44:46] And I did and showed up and I asked him, is there a Bible verse or passage of scripture that is special to you that I could read to you?

And he looked at me, he looked at his wife, and he looked back to me and he just shook his head, no, but she probably has one. And her favorite passage, which I read, Sabatacic 3, 17-19.
Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail, and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls. Basically, if everything that can go wrong does go wrong, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
God the Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the deer's, he makes me tread on high places. And I read that passage, and we talked about it, and I shared the gospel again with her husband, and I pray, we prayed together.
[46:01] No emotion, no reaction, just on my way out. Thanks for coming. The last time I saw him was after his wife called me frantically, saying that they've issued a code blue.

I drove up to the hospital, I rushed into the place where she was, and I stood by her side as I watched three grown men with all of their might taking turns trying to resuscitate her husband, sweating profusely to no avail.
And I was with her when the doctor came and said, we can keep trying, but we could tell there was no use.
I've maybe, excuse me, been a pastor for a year or two, and I remember when the doctor said that, Kathy just looked up to me, tears in her eyes, and we both know that there was no more hope on spoken words.
And I tried to encourage her and just say, you'll make the right decision. And he died. And I stuck around for a little bit with her, but I won't forget going back to my car and just thinking, eternity is a long time.
[47:58] It's forever. The sin you refuse to repent of, the persecution you're avoiding isn't worth the eternal consequence of drifting away and then eventually turning away from your only hope for salvation, who is Jesus Christ.

Christ. We're going to end our worship time differently, and I shared that with you last week, and we're going to do that again today, because I think, you know, after a sermon, there's a lot of different ways that you can adjust your life, that you need to adjust your life according to what you've heard in God's Word, not just one way.
And so, there's going to be reflection questions. And I think sometimes we're thinking about what we have after this, what we have tonight, what we have this week, without giving ourselves the time that we need to truly be introspective, to reflect upon what we've just heard in God's Word, to be challenged by what we've heard, to respond in the way that God would want us to respond.

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And so, there's some reflection questions that I'm going to plan on us ending with every sermon. So, I'll read these questions, and then there'll be a time for you just to pray silently in your pew, and then I will close us in prayer.
Pastor Tyler will come up, and he'll lead us in a song, and again, I encourage that for you to be a time of reflection. I'm going to stand in my pew, and afterwards, I'll come up, and I'll read a benediction, and then we'll be dismissed.
[49:59] But again, this is the time often when God does his work. He does it throughout the sermon, but we need to give him this time to be able to work in our hearts and our minds so that we take in and take to heart the word that we've heard from him and think about how he would have us to respond and then choose to respond in the right ways.

So, here's some questions for you to reflect on. Are you in peril of forsaking Christ? Are you in peril of forsaking Christ?
Are you like that soil that is rocky? Are you tempted to neglect meeting with Christians because they don't excuse the sin that you love so much?
You're in peril. Is that you? Second question, do you know someone who is? Do you know someone who used to be a part of this church?
Who used to express their joy in the Lord, but we haven't seen in a while? Do you know who that person is? And then will you stir them up? Will you seek them out?
[51:07] Will you pray for them, but then go to them? Are you as eager to follow Christ today as you were when he first saved you? Maybe, again, he hasn't changed, but something in you has.

What is that that you need to repent of and change in your life? Next question, are you tempted to shrink back from persecution? You know there's times when you should speak, but you don't because you're afraid of what your friends might think about you, what your family might think about you, what your co-workers might think about you, your teammates, your classmates.
Are you tempted to shrink back from persecution? And if so, is your faith truly in Christ, or is it in something else? Think through those questions as we go to the Lord in prayer.
Confess to him your sins and ask him for his help. Heavenly Father, church is not something that we do.
It's who we are. Your body, your bride, your people whom you've been gracious to save. God, forgive us that at times in our battle with the flesh, we don't strive as we ought to.
[52:46] We're willing to act as if it's not a big deal. And before we know it, Lord, we've drifted far from you. But Lord, we're thankful to know that those whom you have saved, that you keep, that you are the good shepherd who leaves in the 99 to find the one.

And Lord, we know that you've commanded us to be used by you in how you do that. So Lord, we pray for those in our membership who we haven't seen for a while or in some time, that Lord, we would go to them in love, that we would be used by you to encourage them to return.
Lord, we pray that as your people in this nation, as persecution intensifies against the truth that we believe, that our confidence in you would not waver, that you would remind us every day of the possession that we have in you, that we would not shrink back, but that we would press on.
And that we would do so knowing, Lord, that you are the way, the truth, and the life, and the only hope that anyone has for salvation is through you and you alone.
And God, I pray that as a church, Lord, we would be purified by you, purified by your word, by your spirit.
[54:32] God, our desire here is for you to be glorified in our lives. And so we pray, Lord, that we would be a church that stirs each other up to love and good works, that we would be a church that encourages each other, that we would love each other in the ways that only those who have been saved by you can.

And we pray that you would be pleased by all that you see happening here, and that you would be glorified by it. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen. To learn more, visit us in person or see the website at highlandparkbaptist.net.

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