

No Excuse

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[0 : 00] Please stand with me as we, again, honor the reading of God's Word together.

! Hebrews chapter 6, verses 1 through 8.! And this we will do if God permits.

For it is impossible, in the case of those who have been once enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and who have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm, and holding him up to contempt. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated receives a blessing from God.

But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated?

John chapter 6 records Jesus' miracle of feeding 5,000 men by miraculously multiplying a boy's sack lunch consisting of five barley loaves and two fish. Really, Jesus fed between 15,000 and 20,000 people when you factor in the women and the children who no doubt were there and also ate with the men.

[2 : 05] Jesus also provided 12 baskets of leftover food, enough to fill the people's stomachs as they journeyed back home. This is all obviously very remarkable, but what I find interesting is what happens next. John 6, 14 through 15 says, when the people saw the sign, again, his multiplying the loaves and the fish, and they said, this is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world. Verse 15, perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself. Jesus withdraws from the things that people often run to. People, power, prestige.

Imagine being one of Jesus' disciples at this point in his ministry. The crowd has gathered. Jesus performed an amazing miracle. Momentum for his movement is building, and Jesus responds to this by withdrawing alone to the mountains. Perhaps you'd say, well, he's just going off to pray. We know he does that sometimes, but he'll be back. And secretly, though, you might be worried that Jesus' movement might miss its moment. As evening comes, it becomes clear to the disciples that this will be one of Jesus' overnight retreats. So they get into a boat, and they cross over the sea to Capernaum. During their journey, they experience the miracle of Jesus walking on water, which terrified them. Eventually, Jesus joins them in the boat, and they arrive on the other side. John informs us in verse 22 that the next day, the crowd that Jesus fed realized that he had somehow, in some way, arrived on the other side of the sea with his disciples, though they knew he didn't originally go with them. So they got in boats themselves, and they followed Jesus. This is interesting. Jesus keeps trying to avoid the crowd that seems to be totally for him. What's going on? Jesus' words in verse 27 reveal the motivation behind this seemingly perplexing behavior. Jesus says to the crowd that is following him, do not work for the food that perish but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him, God the Father has set his seal. The crowd was so enthralled with the food, they were missing out on the fact that their Messiah had come. And what follows is an exchange between Jesus and the crowd in which he declares that he is the bread of life. John 35, 40, Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me, and yet you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. Bread was a staple of these people's diet. Jesus is saying that like

bread, he is essential for life. Not physical life, but eternal life. Jesus is trying to get their minds off of the physical realm and into the spiritual realm. That physical bread perishes, but he is the bread of life, spiritual bread that brings eternal life. The crowd that followed Jesus became increasingly dissatisfied with his talk about his being the bread of life. In verse 66 says, after this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. The large crowd, including people who referred to themselves as Jesus' disciples, did not go on with him.

They stopped following him. Jesus no longer interested them. So what does John 6 have to do with Hebrews 6? Some members of the congregation addressed in Hebrews were tempted to turn away from Jesus, much like the crowd in John 6 who did turn away.

Like the crowd in John 6, some of the congregation of Hebrews 6 viewed themselves as disciples of Jesus. Like Jesus, the writer of Hebrews 6 is aware that the drifters are in a perilous position of rejecting Jesus as their only hope for salvation. Like Jesus, the writer of Hebrews doesn't care about numbers.

[7 : 46] He won't sacrifice truth to appease people and draw a crowd or keep a crowd. His goal isn't primarily the numerical growth of the church, but the spiritual growth of the church. He desires his readers to grow up in Christ and not drift away from Christ any longer. And he's expressed this desire multiple times already in this letter before we get to this warning in chapter 6. Hebrews 2.1, there he said, therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it.

Hebrews 2.2, the beginning of verse 3, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? Hebrews 3.12, he says, take care brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God. In Hebrews 4.1, he says, therefore while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

Hebrews 6.1.8 is another warning to those who claim to follow Jesus but are in danger of turning or drifting away from him. Now, throughout the history of the church, this passage has been one of the more difficult texts to interpret. There are arguments over who this warning was issued to.

Was it issued to Christians, to non-Christians, or to both? Well, this morning we'll use Scripture, as we always do, to interpret Scripture to answer these questions. But the main idea of this text, I believe, boils down to this. Those who are truly saved have no excuse for failing to grow in spiritual maturity. Those who are truly saved have no excuse for failing to grow in spiritual maturity. It's crucial to read the Bible in context. You can do this by answering questions like, who is the author? Who is the audience? When was it written? Or what is the purpose or the writing of the book? Understanding the context of passages, especially ones like this one this morning, is vital. Because without this background, you risk misinterpreting these verses and drawing conclusions that contradict the rest of Scripture. Hebrews was written to Hebrews. They were Jewish people steeped in knowledge of Old Testament Scriptures and religious practices that were prescribed under the Old Covenant.

[10 : 28] They heard the gospel, and they professed faith in Jesus Christ. As a result of that profession, they were facing persecution, intense persecution from the world. In Hebrews 10, 32 through 34, the writer of Hebrews shares what some of these persecutions they've experienced were. 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 who were 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. Some in this church were showing signs of drifting away from the profession that they had a better possession of the profession that they had originally made about being a follower of Jesus Christ.

Persecution does this. It exposes the reality of a person's salvation. It reveals if they are genuine or a counterfeit follower of Jesus. It reveals how a person truly views Jesus as either a means to receive earthly bread, health, wealth, treasures of this earth that will perish, or if they see him as the means of spiritual bread, eternal life. Jesus compared such counterfeit disciples to seed that fell on shallow soil in his parable in Matthew 13. Matthew 13, 20 through 21 says, 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. In Luke 9, 23, Jesus compared following him to bearing a cross.

And he said to all, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Jesus told his disciples to expect harsh treatment from a world that rejected him and would hate them. John 15, 18 through 19, Jesus says to them, 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. And since this is the case, it could make some wonder, why follow Jesus? The simple answer to that is because he's totally worth it. He is the bread of life. He is the way, the truth, and the life. And the consequences of following Jesus in this world are nothing compared to the eternal consequences that come with rejecting him. Jesus gave his life to give us life. Jesus died on the cross to atone for our sins. And faith in Jesus is the only way for anyone to be made right with God, their creator. In these verses, the writer of Hebrews continues his theme of calling his readers to spiritual maturity. He has more to share with them about the superiority of Christ. He's going to explain the superiority of Jesus's priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. But before he can do that, he issues a warning which communicates the truth that those who are truly saved have no excuse for failing to grow in spiritual maturity. And I believe he gives this warning to encourage his readers to examine the genuineness of their confession and to either press on and endure or to realize that they are drifting away from the great salvation of Jesus Christ. And he's imploring them here to turn back, to repent, and to have true faith in Jesus that truly saves.

Some of you today may be tempted to turn back to your old ways because following Jesus either no longer excites you or the cost of being associated with him or the cost of being associated with him seems too demanding. Maybe you have come to Jesus for physical bread. You want him to fill your stomach instead of your heart. Like the crowd in John 6, because Jesus hasn't done something in your life or prevented something from happening in your life that you thought he should have prevented, you are tempted to drift away from him or to leave him. Some of you may be tempted to trust only in what the writer of Hebrews calls the elementary doctrines of Christ. You've repeated a prayer. You've been baptized. You've gone through some kind of confirmation class. You know what the Bible says about Jesus. Maybe you're trusting in those things for your salvation, but you haven't truly grown spiritually at all. You haven't matured.

[16:16] You aren't bearing the fruit that makes a genuine convert of Jesus Christ. God in his grace, I pray, will reveal your true spiritual condition to you this morning. And that if you aren't saved, I pray that today is the day of your salvation. But maybe you are, and hopefully you are saved.

But God has still brought you here, brother, sister, to hear this word of warning, this warning passage, to spurn you onward to growth and maturity in the Christian faith, and to encourage you to avoid becoming spiritually lethargic, and to remind you of your need to continually be watered by his word, so that you will continue to grow up in Christ. Those who are truly saved have no excuse for failing to grow in spiritual maturity. And so our passage this morning contains three observations or three words to motivate us to go on to spiritual maturity. And the first word is exhortation. That's the first observation. Exhortation. Go on to maturity. Again, the beginning of verse 1 says, therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity. Therefore, refers to what was previously said. The writer of Hebrews makes the observation in chapter 5, verses 11 through 14, that some in the church are still acting like spiritual infants. He's ready to share with them deeper and more profound truths about Jesus being their superior high priest, but he interrupts that instruction to address the fact that some of them are too spiritually immature to stomach it. They still need milk when they should be able to eat solid food. He's told them about their need to develop discernment, to understand and apply God's word to their lives, to commit themselves to following Jesus, to leave the elementary doctrines of him and go on to maturity. The Greek word translated leave means to forsake, omit, disregard, or put away. It refers to a detachment or a separation.

That's a good thing in some cases when we read the New Testament because often that word is used to describe a Christian and their sins. God detaches or he separates us from our sin in salvation. But we have to be careful here to understand the writer of Hebrews' intent behind this word. He wasn't suggesting that they leave or detach themselves from Old Testament Scriptures. We know that because he's been using them, quoting from them, as he's demonstrated that Jesus is superior, that Jesus is the Son of God, that he is the Messiah, the Savior of sinners, who died and rose again to give his eternal life. The context tells us that these basic elementary truths about

Jesus shouldn't be abandoned, but built upon.

The original audience of Hebrews should be beyond the place where the fundamental teachings about Jesus, about the Christian faith, should be rehearsed over and over and over again. They should be built upon by this point. They should know more. Think of something as basic as eating. [20 : 11] Food goes in your mouth and it's chewed and swallowed down your throat. We all know that, correct?

Solid food needs to be chewed by your teeth so that you can swallow it and so that it will go down your throat. And when a parent mimics this with their child in the high seat, they can't communicate with them in words so they'll use their face and open your mouth. Ah, okay. And then they'll put the food in the mouth. Close the mouth. And then they'll mimic chewing or swallowing and then mmm because we want them to like it because we want them to continue to eat so that they continue to grow. Eventually, a child builds on that foundation. They understand language and words and so you can start teaching them how to build on the foundations of eating, picking up little pieces of food with their own hands, putting it in their own mouth, chewing and swallowing and eating on their own. It's messy.

Food doesn't always get into their mouths, so we often will have them eat without a shirt on.

Eventually, though, they learn to build even more on the basic foundational principles for eating. They start using silverware and not their hands to put food in their mouth. And when they eat things like spaghetti, they still get sauce all over their face and their clothes, but they're getting it, right? And at that point, even when they're messy, it's cute when they're a toddler, but it's disgusting when they become a teenager, isn't it? Because they should know by now. We've taught you the basic things about eating food. You shouldn't have to come to the dinner table without your shirt on. And the food should mostly go in your mouth, and if it doesn't, there's a napkin there for you to wipe your face. What we accept for infants, we don't accept for those who should know better.

[22 : 33] And that's what the writer of Hebrews is getting at here. You guys, you know these foundational principles. What is going on? Why haven't you built on these things?

And as you have known Christ, as you've been indwelt by his spirit, you should be putting sin more and more to death in your life, making less of a mess of your life as you're growing up in Christ's likeness.

As the rest of verse one says, they are not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith towards God. The elementary doctrines of Christ are the foundations upon which a Christian life is built. When the foundation for a house is laid, it is ready to be built on.

It is ready for the next step. It's ready for walls and windows and a roof. It's ready, eventually, when those steps are made to be inhabited by people.

Imagine that our prayers are answered and Texas Roadhouse decides they're going to build a restaurant in Bartlesville. We are driving down the road and we see a sign showing a finished, a completed Texas roadhouse next to the future site where it's going to be built on. Bulldozers arrive. They're tearing up the ground. Soon, cement trucks come in and they pour the foundation. Our mouths are watering each time we drive by and we see the foundation of that restaurant taking shape. Everything appears to be moving forward and on schedule. But then weeks pass. Months pass. A year passes. And nothing is ever built on that foundation. But the sign with the picture of what it should look like when it's completed is still there.

[24 : 43] And we look at that sign. And then we look at that foundation with nothing built on it. But as more time goes by, we see some construction trucks come back to the site. And it looks like they're going to start building again. But instead of building on the foundation, they lay another foundation atop of the existing foundation. How do we feel? If you like Texas Roadhouse, perplexed, discouraged, angry, where is our Texas Roadhouse? What's going on? There should be people eating steaks in a completed building, not this steakless, lifeless foundation that is being relayed. What use is that?

The writer of Hebrews is exhorting his readers to stop laying the same foundation repeatedly and to start building on top of it. He does this by using three couplets or three pairs of things to demonstrate these foundational truths or doctrines concerning Jesus Christ they keep relaying and not building on. The first couplet or pairing is a foundation of repentance from dead works towards God.

The Bible teaches that there is no authentic faith without repentance from sin. Matthew 1, 14 through 15, as Jesus began his earthly ministry, says, now after John was arrested, Jesus came

into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, the time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. This is the core of his message. Repent and believe in the gospel. Acts chapter 2, verses 37 through 38, Jesus has risen. He's ascended back into heaven. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, preaches the gospel to the people who are in Jerusalem who are hearing him. And this is what is recorded after that.

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do? And Peter said to them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. So they ask him, what shall we do? And the first thing he says is, repent of your sins. The repentance in view of Hebrews 6, 1 refers to repenting, turning away from dead works, turning away from the religious system that existed under the old covenant with Jesus's death and crucifixion and resurrection nullified. If there's anything the history of human religion tells us, it's that people will seek and do seek to earn their way to heaven. And I believe that this is the case because God created us in his image and he's put eternity in our mind and in our hearts. Jesus's major critique of the Pharisees was their belief that they could earn salvation when in reality all of their works were empty. They could not save them. In the church today, there is a severe lack of talk about repentance. People are told that God accepts them as they are. But to be truly saved by Jesus, you must know that you need to be saved.

[28 : 12] And in order to know that you need to be saved, you need to be aware of what you need to be saved from. You have to understand that salvation is God's doing. It is by grace through faith in who Jesus is and what Jesus has done that saves us.

You don't need to be baptized again and again. You don't need to repeat a prayer over and over again. Salvation is a turning from sin to Jesus, trusting in his work on the cross to save you, believing that he rose again from the dead. It's believing that as far as salvation goes for you in Christ, as he said on the cross, it is finished. The second couplet is in instructions about washing in the laying on of hands. This refers to ceremonial washings, maybe even Christian baptism. Trusting in external washings cannot purify a person's heart. Jesus told this to the Pharisees in Matthew 23, 25 through 26, in very strong terms. He says to them, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and the plate that the outside may also be clean. Laying on of hands, I think, refers to the old covenant sacrificial system, where a person presenting an animal to the priests would lay their hands on the head of that animal, symbolizing the transference of their sins to the animal, which would die as a substitute sacrifice for their sins in their place.

The writer of Hebrews is saying that is no longer necessary. In Christ, you have been washed clean of your sins and you don't need another sacrifice to atone for your sins. The third couplet is the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. Again, this is a basic principle of the Christian faith, which refers to the final judgment. We cannot, a person cannot stand before God in the judgment that is to come if they are not clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, his son. These are basic foundations, basic principles, basic truths of the Christian faith that we are to build on, not question and not relay another foundation. And the closing verse of this exhortation says in verse three, and this we will do if God permits. This teaches us not to presume that our spiritual maturity is something that we do entirely on our own. If the Holy Spirit indwells you, he will preserve you, he will teach you, he will equip you, he will gift you, he will use the Bible, the word he's inspired to water you and to cause you to grow up in Christ. If there is no growth, no spiritual maturity, then you should be extremely concerned. And we go on to the next observation, the second word, which is expulsion. Expulsion, holding Jesus up to contempt. Again, verses four through six say, for it is impossible in the case of those who have been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift and have shared in the Holy Spirit and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come and then have fallen away to restore them again to repentance as they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. These are hard verses to interpret and some people have misinterpreted them to mean that a Christian can lose their salvation. When we come to difficult passages like this, it is critical, it is vital that we use Scripture to interpret Scripture. God will not contradict himself in his word. The Bible says that a Christian who is truly saved cannot lose their salvation. I'm going to read a few

passages to you that teach us that truth. John 5, 24. Jesus said, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but he has passed from death to life. John 10, 27 through 30.

[33 : 24] Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one. Romans 11, 29 says, for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Philippians 1, 6 says, and I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you, talking of their salvation, will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. If these verses in Hebrews 6, 1 through 8 teach that a Christian can lose their salvation, then that would mean that such a person, for such a person, it is impossible for them to ever be restored to salvation. In other words, if it's gone, it's gone for good, it's gone forever.

If you were saved and you lost your salvation, you could never be saved again. Thankfully, that's not the case. Many of you know I grew up Nazarene and I was taught that you could lose your salvation. And as a teenager, this was terrifying for me. I mean, there were sleepless nights that I had just going over questions like, at what point does a person lose salvation?

Where's the line? Where's the point of no return? I know the unpardonable sin to grieve the Holy Spirit, and it seems to me that every sin grieves God. And if that's the case, then just one sin seems to be enough to cause me to lose my salvation.

And if that's the case, what happens if I sin and then I die the next minute? Am I going to spend my eternity in hell?

These verses that I read to you earlier, this truth that's taught from Scripture in seminary brought great comfort and peace to me. And treated as I got some kind of get out of hell free card, they produced in me instead a great praise and joy that God would save me and that God would keep me.

[36 : 06] I didn't have to worry about that truth ever again. These verses are a warning to those who are in danger of committing apostasy. They are people who were like in the crowd in John 6. They've tasted, they've heard the words of God, they've seen the effects, the blessings of that on his people.

They've seen God bring sinners to salvation. They know the gospel. They've seen the Holy Spirit work in the lives of others. They've experienced, they've tasted, they've sampled, but they haven't truly partaken. For the original audience, to those who weren't truly saved, the writer is saying that if you fall back into Judaism, if you refer back to old covenant ceremonies, rituals, and observances, if you choose to trust in those dead works, it's impossible for you to be saved because those things cannot save anyone. We have all known people who have made a public profession of faith in Jesus, who got really involved in the church, who showed signs of spiritual growth, and yet who ultimately fell away. They knew the gospel. They knew what Jesus offered, but in the end, they turned away. And they left. And in their departure, as the writer of Hebrews says to us here, they are in effect saying, I don't need Jesus. Their departure, they are in effect re-crucifying Jesus because they are holding him up to contempt. And as a result of rejecting Jesus, they will be rejected by him.

Matthew 10, 32 through 33, Jesus said, So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

Revelation 3, 15 through 16 records a stark warning given from our Lord to the church in Laodicea, who resembled the sinful world more than him. And there he says, I know your works. You are neither cold nor hot.

Would that you were either cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. I will expel you out of my mouth.

[38 : 57] There's argument over whether these are backsliding Christians or if these are maybe people like in John 6, who claim to be followers of Christ but weren't.

And I think the truth is that in just about every church, you have a mixture of both. And what we need to pay attention to is the warning. Are we living according to our faith?

Or has our fervor cooled to the point of being tepid? It's possible for believers to become lazy and unmotivated at times.

And it's possible for unbelievers to pretend to be religious and call themselves Christians. Whether or not the Laodiceans were again, we must heed the warning Jesus gave them of being expelled from his mouth.

To abandon God's son is ultimately to say that his death didn't save. And it was for nothing. So now we come to the third observance, the third word, example, producing a crop or bearing weeds.

[40 : 12] The concluding illustration here, the writer helps us to understand the rest of the passage. The word for marks that an explanation for all that he said is about to come.

And here it is in verses 7 through 8. For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed and its end is to be burned. The life-giving rain of God's grace falls on all of us in the worshiping community of the church.

His word will not return to him void. It will have an effect as it falls on the good soil of those who have been truly saved, who have truly trusted in Jesus Christ, who have repented of their sins. It will produce a crop. It will continue to be blessed by God. It will continue to flourish in the life of those who are truly saved.

[41 : 23] But if it doesn't, if instead it produces thorns and thistles, thoughts when you hear God's word in the church that might sound like this, well, that doesn't sound like God to me.

Or did God really say that? Or that's just not what I believe. Then such a field will be cursed and it will be burned.

Jesus puts it this way in Matthew 13, 23. Again, the parable of the soils. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it.

He indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another 60, in another 30. There might be more fruit for some than others, but there is fruit for all who have truly trusted in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

And so I ask you, is there fruit? Is there fruit, brother? Is there fruit, sister, friend?

[42 : 44] Is there evidence in your life that you are truly saved?

Do you really desire to be like Jesus? The Jesus that we read in his word? Do you want to be like him?

Who else would you rather be more like than him? We're all works in progress and none of us is at the point where we want to be.

But there should be evidence. There should be fruit. You should be able to look back to the moment when God was gracious to save you and say, yeah, I can see the fruit.

Sometimes we're more hard on ourselves than we need to be, but you should be able to see that, yes, my life has changed. And it's changed more and more as I've followed Jesus. You're not going to be perfect in this life.

[43 : 44] But God is shaping you ever more increasingly into the image of his son Jesus. And there should be evidence of that. And so how do we adjust our lives according to what we've heard?

Here's one way is to just earnestly pursue spiritual maturity. Again, using discernment. Being in God's word. Spending time in prayer.

Living your life in obedience to the Lord. That's what being discerning is. Growing up in Christ. Becoming more like him.

Is that what you truly desire? Is that what you're most pursuing? And if not, it could be just that, you know, as a result of still having the sin nature and being at war with the flesh, that, yeah, sometimes our eyes are taken off of where they need to be.

And God in his grace, as I hope and pray he has this morning, takes our eyes and puts them back on him where they should never have left, where they never should have drifted from. Or it could be that if that's not the case, I really encourage you to examine your own heart.

[45 : 01] Are you trusting in who Jesus is and what Jesus has done to save you? Or are you trusting in some external thing? Like, you know, I came down an aisle.

I repeated a prayer. I was baptized. Those aren't necessarily bad things, but those aren't things that save you. It's your repenting of your sin. It's your trusting in Jesus Christ. God's word will have the last word here, and it's what comes next in Hebrews 6, 11 through 12.

And I just want to tell you before I pray, as your pastor, this is my desire for you. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness, to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so

that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promise.

Let's pray. Lord, you know all things.

You know every person who's in this room. You know everyone who maybe is at home online listening to this sermon from this text. Lord, you know the true condition of their heart.

[46 : 22] You know whether or not they truly belong to you or if they don't. And so, God, I pray in your grace and your goodness that you would cause that kind of self-examination to happen today, tomorrow, and the weeks to come.

Because, God, we've got evidence from your word, your proclamation to us. We've seen it, examples of it in Scripture, where there were many who thought that they knew you but didn't. And, God, you've told us, Lord, that a day will come when you will come in judgment. And there will be many who will say to you on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not do this?

Did we not do that? Did we not do all these other things? And you'll tell them, depart from me, for I never knew you. And so, God, we know that you're sovereign in salvation. We also know that, Lord, people have a responsibility.

And I pray that people would choose today to just examine their lives and their hearts even more closely than they have before.

[47 : 27] That, Lord, if they've been self-deceived, that you would reveal that. And they would turn to you in faith. And for those of us, Lord, whom you've been gracious to save, I pray that that still examination would take place.

That we would just look at the spiritual maturity that we've seen in our lives. And if it's lacking, to make up for the lack. To work to pursuing our own spiritual maturity and growth and development, knowing why that's a good thing.

And, Lord, for those who are excelling at it, I pray that they would excel still more. And that they would teach, that they would guide, that they would give encouragement to others. And, God, I pray that as a church, that it would be our desire, our earnest desire, to have the full assurance of our hope in you to the end.

That we would not be sluggish. That we would be imitators of those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promise. And so, God, we need your help in this.

And we trust that you'll provide it. And we pray that you'll be pleased and glorified through it all. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. I'm I'm I'm I'm I'm