

Eight Reasons to Keep Going

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Introduction.

- A. On the screen behind me, we see one of the most famous passages in the Bible, Matthew 11:28-30. This is a very comforting passage, but we need to understand that Jesus is speaking comparatively. His yoke is far, far easier than the Law of Moses, which required perfect law-keeping, and it's even more comparatively easy next to the death-dealing yoke of sin. That doesn't mean, though that it's easy to be a Christian.
- B. All of us can agree, in fact, that there are times when being a Christian is quite hard. Satan is actively at work in all of our lives making serving God as difficult as he can, and he's pretty good at it. We need to have jobs to support ourselves, but those jobs often cut into the time we want to give to God. Many of us have family members who actively discourage our faith, so that sometimes getting out the door to go to worship is a struggle. That's not even to mention the evil people around us who are either actively tempting us or who are shunning us for our commitment to Christ. In a world like this, sometimes we're tempted to just quit.
- C. There's nothing new about this problem. In fact, we see a number of very similar problems reflected in the letter to the Hebrews. Those Jewish Christians of 2000 years ago had an awful lot in common with us today. Just like us, they had family members who were constantly after them, in their case, to go back to Judaism. Just like us, they were surrounded by evil people who opposed God's will. In the case of the Hebrews, they had to endure active persecution for the cause of Christ. Just like us, they were tempted to quit.
- D. This, in fact, is the immediate reason why the letter to the Hebrews was written. God knew that His people were in need of encouragement, so He had the anonymous author of Hebrews send them this epistle. Friends, just like we have to deal with the same problems 2000 years later, we can take heart from the same encouragement 2000 years later. Let's turn to Hebrews this morning for eight reasons to keep going.

I. Hebrews 1-6.

- A. In order as we move through the book of Hebrews, the first reason that is presented to us why we should keep going as Christians is because there is **NO OTHER SALVATION**. This thought appears in Hebrews 2:1-3. In context, the Hebrews writer has been establishing the superiority of Jesus over angels. From this, he here concludes that the gospel of Jesus is superior to the Old Law, which was delivered by those angels. The point is that Jesus offers us something that nothing else and no one else can. He offers us freedom from our sins, which even the Law of Moses could not grant. Once we pass up Jesus, there's not even the possibility that we are going to find that blessing and other blessings anywhere else. It reminds me of a story that my dad tells about a time, long ago, when he went on a car trip down an interstate that had just finished getting built. It was through empty country, and literally no gas stations had yet been built along it. He drove, and he drove, and he drove, and he found nothing. Eventually, he ran out of gas. Friends, once we pass up Jesus, that's the way our lives are going to be. We can look as long as we want, but we'll never find help.
- B. In a somewhat cheerier vein, the second reason the Hebrews writer gives us to keep going is to claim **THE REWARD**. He describes this reward in Hebrews 4:9-11. Once again, he's been drawing a comparison to an Old Testament concept, in this case, the journey of the Israelites to the rest of the promised land. The problem that they had is that they were disobedient along the way, so that only two men of the 600,000 who set out made it. In the same way, friends, we are on a journey as Christians: the journey to heaven. The Hebrews writer also tells us that just like there was a rest awaiting them at the end of the journey, so too there's a rest waiting for us at the end of ours. What we have to do to claim that rest is just the same thing that the Israelites had to do and didn't. We have to keep believing, we have to keep trusting, and we have to keep going. This is an all-or-nothing proposition that we have embarked on here, brethren. If we die in the wilderness like the Israelites did, God isn't going to give us a halfway restful place to spend eternity. Instead, if we give up on following Jesus now, all of the hard work we've put into serving God up to this point will go for absolutely nothing. Heaven is waiting for us, folks, but we have to cross the finish line to get there.
- C. The next reason that we have to keep going is that we can turn for help to **JESUS, OUR HIGH PRIEST**. The Hebrews writer explains why this matters in Hebrews 4:14-16. Ever had to turn for help to someone who you thought didn't really care about you? Years and years ago, back when my mother was pregnant with my little sister, my brother brilliantly got infected with the German measles. That's seriously bad news, because if a pregnant woman gets the German measles, the baby is going to be born with severe birth defects. My mother went to her doctor to see what she should do, and the doctor told her that even though she hadn't had the German measles yet, she should have an abortion just in case. I'm sure you can imagine what my mother thought of that idea, but when she refused, this doctor actually began to yell at her and try to browbeat her into having that abortion! That, friends, is exactly the way that Jesus is NOT. Jesus is totally, completely, 100 percent in our corner. He loves us more than we love ourselves, and He is willing to do anything to help us

with our problems and get us to finish our pilgrimage in heaven. That means, friends, that when things start looking tough or even impossible, what we need to do then, instead of giving up, is to turn to Jesus for help.

- D. Yet another reason why we should continue in our service to God, even when it's hard, is because of **GOD'S PROMISES**. We see the effect of these promises described in Hebrews 6:17-18. God hasn't just promised us help and reward; He has sworn that He will give it to us. It's not like we're going to seek spiritual help from God and He's going to say, "Oh, I was just kidding about that prayer thing." It's not like we're going to get to the day of judgment and God is going to say, "Oh. You thought you would go to heaven if you followed the Bible? Dumb you." Instead, it is a lead-pipe cinch, brethren, that if we continue to do what God says, He will give us the reward He promised. That is true for absolutely every one of us. God wants every one of us in heaven, and He will make it happen. All we have to do is hold up our end of the deal.

II. Hebrews 7-13.

- A. The fifth reason that the Hebrews writer gives us to persevere is **THE PRICE OF FAILURE**. He sets this forth in Hebrews 10:28-29. Friends, if any of us who are Christians quit serving God now and go back to the world, it's not like we're just back at square one. It's not like we're in the same boat as everyone else who never left the world. Instead, our situation has changed. The sinner who has never repented is someone who has never really known God. By contrast, the willfully sinning Christian is someone who has known God, but has turned his back on Him. As this passage says, that puts us in the position of trampling Jesus underfoot, counting His blood as an unclean thing, and insulting the Holy Spirit, and God feels about that just the way that we would expect Him to feel. Luke 12 tells us that after the judgment, the backslid Christian will face an even worse punishment than the rebel who never obeyed the gospel. It may be that there is an especially horrible section of hell reserved for the wayward child of God. It may just be that the torments of hell are worse for that child because he knows exactly how he could have escaped them. I don't know. I do know this, though, brethren: I don't want to find out, and I don't want any of you to find out either. Let's stay faithful so we don't find out.
- B. We are also motivated to stay faithful, though, by **THE EXAMPLE OF OTHERS**. The Hebrews writer touches on this topic in Hebrews 11:1-2. This idea is actually closely connected to the idea of God's promises. The Bible certainly claims that God will follow through on His word to us, but it's the Bible's record of God's dealing with the faithful that really proves the point. We can look at the story of Abraham and learn from that that all of God's promises come true. We can look at the story of Job and see that God is faithful and will eventually bless His people, no matter what trials come in between. We can look at the story of Elijah and see that God is always there for us, even when we are in despair. It's one of the amazing things about God that He always, always, always comes through for the ones who love Him. If we keep going, He'll come through for us too.
- C. Next in line, we are encouraged to remain faithful by the greatest example of all. We are encouraged to remain faithful and claim the reward because **JESUS DID IT**. The Hebrews writer points this out in Hebrews 12:2-3. There are a bunch of Christians out there who subconsciously believe that their road to heaven should be easy, and they get upset with God when it's not. In the words of the hymn, they expect to be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease. Friends, if we are truly following Jesus, why in the world would we expect an easy road when the road that Jesus traveled wasn't? In fact, I daresay that the road that Jesus traveled was far harder than any we will be called upon to walk. Jesus had to go through all kinds of stuff. He had to deal with poverty. He had to deal with people who didn't want to listen. He had to deal with disciples who thought He was either a meal ticket or a pathway to earthly wealth and power. At the end of it all, though, Jesus had to deal with enemies who mocked Him, beat Him, and murdered Him slowly and painfully. And He knew from beginning to end that the cross was where He was headed. Don't think that Satan wasn't after Jesus too. Don't think that Satan didn't give Jesus every opportunity to quit that he could. But you know what? Despite all that, despite all of the enemies arrayed against Him, despite all the obstacles in His path, Jesus made it. He despised the shame for the joy set before Him, and He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Brethren, if Jesus did it, we can do it too. Let's press on and not lose heart.
- D. Finally, though, we need to keep going because **GOD REQUIRES IT**. This idea appears in Hebrews 12:25. In the world of high-level coaching these days, it's common for college and professional coaches to include buyout clauses in their contracts. This means that if the coach gets a job offer from someone who's offering him a better team or more money, he can pay the amount of the buyout clause and get out of his contract. Friends, there are no buyout clauses in the contract that we've made with God. When we were baptized, we promised to remain faithful until death, and there aren't any exceptions. Over and over, through His word, God commands us to persevere and press on and keep going, and there aren't any exceptions to those commands either. God appreciates our human frailties. He's the one who made us this way, after all. He knows that life is hard for us. He knows that sometimes we struggle and sometimes we stumble. Through His grace, He accepts all that. What God doesn't accept is when we stop struggling, when we stop stumbling, when we just give up because we say going on is too hard. He's given us everything we need to keep going, friends. The only thing that we put in is the will to be faithful, but He absolutely expects us to give it.

Conclusion. Are you living up to the requirements of God? If not, today is the day to change.