

(Spiritual Dangers) the Danger of Presumption

by Don Currin

The sermon emphasizes the importance of perseverance in the face of trials and temptations, and warns against the danger of hardening one's heart against God's voice.

Duration: 57:49

Scripture: Hebrews 3:7

Topics: "Presumption"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the Israelites' 40-year trial in the wilderness, which revealed their tendency to wander from God. He then relates this to the experience of an old man in the church who is facing death. The preacher observes that many elderly people in churches today are bitter, cynical, and critical, which is not a good sign of their faith. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of testing in revealing the authenticity of one's faith and encourages the congregation to diligently make their calling and election sure.

Transcript

Good evening, everyone. It's a joy to see you tonight. I appreciate you making your way out to the services this evening.

Your presence is always, as I've said many times before, an encouragement to me, and I know certainly the Lord is very pleased with your attendance. I want to say that, Brother Schenkel, I was going back over my notes today. I've been here, this is the sixth time.

Yeah, I said five, but six times. And so, you folks are a glutton for punishment. And so, it's a blessing.

I'm always the one that receives abundantly more than I trust that you all do. I'm just so blessed to be here, and I know that I'm here by divine providence. That's the only reason.

And I'm thankful for the opportunity to exercise the spiritual gift that God's given me. Now, tonight I'm going to speak on the subject of perseverance. And I've got to tell you today, we went over and saw Brother Larry, and my family and I went over to see Brother Ted Motter.

And you talk about a picture, an example of perseverance. I mean, there's a brother there that he's gone through quite a bit over the last few years. The loss of his dear wife, and of course, repeated afflictions.

And, you know, when you get older like that, and it just seems like people drift away, and your friends start dying out, it's a true test of whether or not you're in Christ. And boy, he has persevered admirably. I'm just so blessed.

And he looked at me today through a veil of tears a couple of times, and he said, Brother Don, I love you. And he said, I want you to know, I pray for you every day. Twice he told me, I pray for you every day.

And I thought, boy, that is music to my ears. That just made not only my day, but my year. I tell you, what a blessing he is.

And I don't know if you know or not, I know pastors mention this a few times, but God used Brother Ted to bring me to Lemoyne Baptist Church. And he was down there. Of course, they would go down and camp out down near McAllen, Texas.

And he would attend this Maranatha Baptist Church, which the pastor there was increasingly becoming Sovereign Grace. And, of course, he began to battle through some things. And people rose up against him.

And Brother Ted was such a support to him. And, of course, I just began to bond with Brother Ted and his dear wife. And he brought the tapes back from those meetings up here.

And Brother Shinkle listened to them, and I guess some of the men did. And that's how I received the invitation. So, I tell you, I just marvel at the providence of God, don't you? How the Lord just orchestrates things and allows us to be a very small part of these ministry opportunities and meeting so many fine people.

Well, tonight I'm not going to tarry long. I know I preached a long time last night. And I'll try not to presume that I'm going to preach beyond that or preach as long as I did last night.

I believe that this will be very brief. And, basically, it's two things I want to share with you. I just want to lay some theological groundwork here in regard to this matter of perseverance.

And then I want to make it very applicable. I want to share with you some practical things that we learn in the light of the things that we glean from this text here in Hebrews chapter number 3. Now, let me direct your attention once again. There's nothing wrong with repeating the Word of God.

But I'd like to begin reading in verse number 6. And I'm going to read through verse 14. And I want you to listen carefully. The pastor, I believe, read out of the New King James.

I'm reading out of the Old King James. And I believe they compliment one another throughout this passage. And just listen to this, if you would.

It says in verse number 6 of Hebrews chapter 3, But Christ is the Son over His own house, whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. The end of our days. The end of our life.

Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. As in the season of testing. Referring to the Israelites and how the Lord tested them.

In the day of temptation in the wilderness. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore, I was grieved with that generation and said, they do always, always, there's a key word there, always err in their hearts.

And they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest. Take heed now, brethren.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. Do you ever think about what an evil heart of unbelief is? Do you know that some of the most sincere professors of salvation in Jesus Christ can have an evil heart of unbelief and it can be ongoing? But you see, if that's your lot in life and that is the ongoing experience of your own relationship with God, it is not a good sign that you've ever been converted. More than likely, you're a stranger to the grace of God.

An evil heart of unbelief, someone said years ago, is not what you have not believed, but rather who you've not believed. You know, when we commit any sin, I find we sin against the very hand of God. But when we commit the sin of unbelief, we sin against the heart of God.

We strike at God's heart. An evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

And here he reiterates what he has already shared with us back in verse 6 again. For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. Now, I know that probably most of you don't need this explanation, but just in case there are those present here that do, you've got to understand that we don't hold the confidence to get saved.

But if we're truly in Christ, we will continue to tenaciously, in the midst of great trials in our life, hold on to Christ. Believe in Christ. Continue to follow hard after Christ.

Obey the Lord. And that's holding with confidence. Holding the confidence firm unto the end.

It's enduring. It's persevering through the trials of life. And so, this is what I want to talk to you about tonight.

You know, as you study the book of Hebrews, there are different books in the Bible that the very theme, the entirety of the book as far as the theme is concerned, is a warning against apostasy. Now you say, well, what is apostasy? Well, when we talk about apostasy, we're not talking about losing your salvation, and neither are we talking about backsliding. I believe that a genuine believer in Christ can backslide.

And I stand very strong against carnal Christianity that says, if you've prayed a prayer and made a decision, then you can live like the devil and expect to go to heaven someday. The Bible does not teach that. But apostasy is a person who perhaps has very sincerely prayed the sinner's prayer.

They've made a decision, but yet they begin to vacillate and then start going downhill. And maybe over a period of weeks or months or maybe in a series of years, they fall completely away from the faith. It shows that, first of all, they never were converted.

They never were truly born again. And so, you've got to understand tonight that repeatedly in the Old Testament as well as the New, there are large passages and there are entire books devoted to this warning against apostasy, this falling away. The purpose of Hebrews is to show that Christ is God's only

provision for sin as the Levitical law was inadequate to redeem sinners from their hopeless state.

And so, therefore, we learn from this book because just as it was a warning to those not to draw back from Christ, not to fall away and go back into Judaism, so it's a warning to us not to leave the way of righteousness, not to leave that focused life of looking to Christ and Christ alone continuously, day after day, and going back into worldliness or into idolatry. Now, sadly, there are many who profess no Christ as their Savior that are drifting and they are falling back. And even yesterday morning's message, that's basically what we were talking about.

There are some that have been complacent for a long season of their life and it's not a good sign that they're truly in the kingdom. And sadly, many of those people, there's no doubt that they're strangers to the grace of God because if you know Christ, if you truly know Christ, I believe you're going to persevere in holiness. It doesn't mean that you're perfect.

We're not talking about perfection. We're talking about perseverance. But you keep rising up.

You keep continuing on. A righteous man falls down seven times, but he continues on. The Bible says, Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord God shall deliver them out of... what? All of them.

All of them. So, here's the theme of the message tonight. You find that God sends trials and testings into our life.

It is the goodness of God. Once again, it's motivated by extraordinary, infinite mercy. He is sending these trials and testings into our life to prove the genuineness of our faith.

Have you ever noticed that you find that the Bible speaks volumes about assurance as it's connected to continuance? You know, I hear people all the time say, Well, God promised me that He would say, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. And that's true. And thank God for His promises.

And my, how they breed assurance. But I tell you, friend, If you're only embracing the promises of God, but you're not persevering in the faith, then your profession of faith is suspect. He may even use, you find in the Scripture, temptation.

Not just testings, not just trials, but also temptation to reveal faith's genuineness. You see, it is by His test that He shows us whether our faith is real or counterfeit. Our endurance through the adversities of life evidence the validity of our faith.

Now, notice this. You remember there in the parable of what I call the souls, because the seed never changes. But it's the parable of the souls.

The good ground here. The thorny ground here. The hardened here.

And the Bible tells us about the shallow ground here. And in those texts there that you find in Matthew 13 and Mark 4 and Luke 8, you find that the very agents that cause the stony ground here and the thorny ground here to fall away from the Lord Jesus Christ are the very things that cause the true child of God to grow and be nourished and endure life's trials. What are those three things? Tribulation, temptation, and persecution.

Those three things. You see, no matter how intense the heat gets in your life, no matter how many people speak to you in a contemptible way, no matter how much people express gestures of disdain for your

so-called religion. Listen, if you're in Christ, those things may trouble you.

They may concern you. But I tell you, there's something within you. There's a divine dynamic that causes you to rise above that and persevere through all that persecution.

The parable of the soils, we find that God uses tribulation, persecution, and temptation to reveal the state of the soil. As one man put it, the state of the soil determines the fate of the seed. The state of the soil determines the fate of the seed.

Case in point, listen to these passages. In Matthew 13, verses 20-21, the Lord Jesus says, But he that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same as he that heareth the word, and anon, enthusiastically, with joy, he receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but doerth for a while, Listen, for when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, by and by he is offended, and he turns his back upon these providences of God.

Here's another text, Luke 8, verse 13. Once again, our Lord speaks and He says, They on the rock are they which when they hear, receive the word, once again with joy. Oh man, this is great.

I mean, heaven, I don't want to go to that old nasty, horrible, dark place called hell. This is great. The prospects of spending eternity in heaven with people that I love and with a God that loves me.

I like that. They receive it with joy. But listen to this.

These have no roots, which for a while they believe. They attest to knowing Christ is their Savior. And then it says, and in time of temptation they fall away.

So you see, the very agents that cause the good ground here to grow strong and grow in grace and persevere in life, are the very agents that cause the stony ground here and the thorny ground here to fall away from the faith. And what are they once again? Tribulation, persecution, and temptation. Now, with that in mind tonight, what I want to do is look at our text for a moment and just draw out a few things from it to sort of anchor our thoughts in.

First of all, I want you to consider with me the warning of an unfailing spirit. The warning of an unfailing spirit. The Spirit of God.

Notice in verses 7 and 8. Chapter 3, verses 7 and 8. The Scripture says, Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation in the day of temptation in the wilderness. Now, there are just three things I want to mention in passing here regarding the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual. First of all, you'll notice, here He says, He speaks of the voice of the Spirit.

The Holy Ghost saith. Now, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. I believe that we have in our hands a more sure word of prophecy.

It is inerrant, it is inspired, it is infallible. It has every hope for us to rest all of our confidence in. But it's almost as if, here, a holy man of old, no doubt, is being moved by the Holy Ghost in a very real sense.

He is jotting down what is being dictated to him. And it's almost as if the Holy Spirit says, I want to embolden this. I want to speak here.

In my speaking, I want to double emphasize this. I'm speaking. I'm going to speak very directly.

I'm going to speak very clearly. I'm going to speak very boldly here. And I've got a message for you.

It's the voice of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost saith. And what does He say? Now, notice, secondly, the urgency of the Spirit.

Today. Today, if you'll hear His voice. Now, do you ever notice in the Scripture that when we talk about God's economy, He's always speaking in the present tense? Because we don't have the assurance of tomorrow.

Jesus Christ said, sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. The Holy Word says, boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. And here is the message that God has for us in this very hour, friend.

You see the very urgency of the heart of God as it's being revealed through the voice of the Holy Spirit. Today. Today.

Why? Because my spirit shall not always strive with man. And you see, if God spoke to you about a high place last night, friend, it is imperative that you respond to that voice of conviction when God speaks. Because I'm telling you, there is enough evil within your heart, and there's enough pressure from the world to make these little mental compromises, where what you do is you cast to the very wind the thing that God wants you to do to please Him.

Today. Right now. If God's speaking, you obey His voice.

We see the urgency of the Spirit, but then there's another thing concerning this blessed Spirit, and that is the constraint of the Spirit. And here is the message. And I tell you, I don't know about you, but my conscience receives this.

It's almost as if there's a divine embellishment here. The Holy Ghost sayeth, Today, if you'll hear His voice, harden not your hearts. Now, I don't know if you caught this yesterday or not, but in reading this passage, this exhortation from Spurgeon as he spoke on a hardened heart, he said repeatedly you find where God gives warnings not to harden your hearts.

There should never be any spiritual hardness that develops in our heart. Any deception, any blindness there. Because you see, while there are repeated warnings not to harden your heart, yet you never find where God says you can rectify the situation, and now you can start developing, you can start tenderizing your heart once again.

I believe for years that our heart ought to be so tender, ought to be so sensitive, that if a leaf were to fall on it, it would leave an impression. Now, I don't know about you, friend, but I've known times in my spiritual life, in my pilgrimage, when, listen, even though I didn't feel like it, my obedience was nothing short of radical, and the result of that is my heart was tender and sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. He's yours tonight.

He's yours tonight. In recent days, there's been one storm after another in my life, and yes, the feelings come and the feelings go, and the feelings are deceiving. But I tell you, deep down inside, there's a holy resolve that it's better to obey God, it's better to obey God rather than man or my own flesh.

So whether I feel like it or not, Lord, I want to please You. I want to be obedient to whatever You tell me to do. The constraint of the Spirit hardened.

Listen. This is a powerful word, friend. Harden not your hearts.

And you see, the minute you neglect what you hear, you start on a road. You're much like Nabal. Your heart starts developing into a state of stone.

You don't hear His voice as clearly as you once did if you start negotiating with God when God says to obey. There's another thing I want you to see, and that is the way of an unyielding heart. The way of an unyielding heart.

We've seen what the unfailing Spirit says. But in Hebrews 3, verses 9-13, we find the way of an unyielding heart. Look at the text once again.

Let's look at it afresh. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works, He's speaking to these Jews. Forty years.

Wherefore, I was grieved with that generation and said, They do always err in their heart. And they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath that they shall not enter into my rest, that spiritual abode, that spiritual rest.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily while on this call today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Let me just share with you tonight just three things, once again in passing, concerning this process, this deadly digression of having a heart, this heart toward God, this unyielding heart.

First of all, it begins with an erring heart. An erring heart. You'll notice right there in our text.

They do always err in their heart. Now, listen, brethren. I believe that everything that happens in our life, in every decision that we make, is a reflection of our heart.

Do you know who you associate with? Manifest your heart. What you say is a revelation of your heart. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

The things you watch on television reveals the true nature of your heart. How you dress reflects your heart. Your interest.

How you spend your time. What absorbs your thinking are all reflections of your heart. Do you know if your heart is always erring, I would give you a challenge.

I would issue to you a challenge tonight to give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Because you see in all these areas how you spend your time, who you associate with, who you interact with, what you take pleasure in, these all being a reflection of your heart, friend. If they all speak back to you, erring hearts, it's not a good sign that you're on the road to righteousness.

It's not a good sign you're on the road to heaven. The foundation of this hard heart is an erring heart. And I want to ask you tonight, have you taken God's side? Have you resisted the spirit of the world? Are you battling? You see, I'm going to come back to this later, but I believe that one of the great assurances of conversion is the daily conflict.

I mean, if you're just yielding, man. And I mean, it's smooth sailing for you. Man, you come to church.

I mean, that's no sacrifice. You come to church every now and then, you know, and you're taught religious language. But I tell you, if there's not a daily battle for consecration and holiness and godliness in your life, you have to wonder if your heart's ever been changed.

You see, you look in the life of the Israelites, that season of provocation. Notice how many tests they failed. And we'll not have time to go into all of this, but first of all, they failed the test of delay.

They're in Exodus 32, verses 1-35. You know, Moses is up in the mountain. They're waiting upon God's man to return.

And here in his delay, they come to Aaron and they tell Aaron to make us a god. Make us something that we can worship. And sure enough, you know, he creates this golden calf.

They failed the test of delay. They're erring in their heart. They're always... You find that they failed the test of temperance, self-control.

They're in Numbers 25, verses 1-9. As they commit gross immorality, most of the people do. They failed the test of patience.

They're in Numbers 21, verses 5-9. They tempted God by questioning His goodness. He said, is the Lord really among us? And yet, God had shown Himself strong on their behalf on a number of occasions.

He had been faithful to His people. And because God didn't come through for them exactly at that moment, they questioned God's goodness. Is He really here? They failed the test of patience.

They failed the test of endurance. They're in Numbers 14, verses 27-30. They murmured against God because there was no food and water once again.

You see, the key in the text for you is they do always err in their hearts. Always. It wasn't just an occasional thing.

Listen, true believers can sin. They're not sinless, but they will sin less and less and less. We don't always pass the test, do we, brethren? But I tell you, most of the time, if anything comes into our life that rocks our boat and is uncomfortable for us, we're murmuring, we get under the cloud, we're anxious, we're unforgiving, we're justifying ourselves, and we fail the test continuously.

We do always err in our hearts. I trust that's not your case. Unlike true believers in the Scripture who persevere through their trials, such as those in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11.

Let me just cite a couple for you. First of all is Abraham there in verse 17. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, there is the testing, the trial again in his faith, offered up Isaac, and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.

You see, the trial was, this is the most precious, the most priceless possession of my life. My own son. A son of my own age.

A gift from God. And now God wants me to sacrifice him back to the Lord. But in the face of that tremendous trial, He still offers up His son Isaac unto the Lord.

He passes the test. Moses in Hebrews 11 verses 24-26. We find now God is using persecution in Moses' life.

But it says by faith. Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. And you've got some of you young people in college or in high school, I mean, you have relentless temptations where peers around you, they want you to make compromises by the moment.

But will you stand steadfast? Will you stand strong? Will you endure the temptation to compromise your morality or compromise your heart for God? Here is a man that identified with the people of God, choosing rather to suffer the reproach than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He passed the test in the face of the most incredible odds, the most incredible adversity. We see it in the patriarchs of the Old Testament such as the patients of Job, did we not? Following the loss of his possessions and children, he blessed God.

In Job 1, verse 21, he said, naked came out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return. The Lord gave. The Lord hath taken away.

But listen, blessed be the name of the Lord. He still blesses his God. Brother, that takes true conversion to do that.

That takes a dynamic faith that is more than dynamic. It's divine. There is the person also, you find as you continue to read the life of Job, following his affliction with bulls and being tempted to curse God by his wife, he would not sin with his lips.

Listen to the word there in verses 9 and 10 in chapter 2. Then said his wife unto him, dost thou retain thy integrity? Curse God and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

He never complained. He never murmured against providence. It takes a saved man to do that.

Consider the perseverance of Ezekiel. How precious is your mate, your wife, your husband. After the death of this prophet's beloved wife, he does as he is commanded in Ezekiel 24, verses 15-18.

Listen to the text. Also the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke. Yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep.

I don't want you to weep for it. I don't want you to cry. Neither shall thy tears run down forbear to cry.

Make no mourning for the dead. Bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning.

And at evening, my wife died. My wife died. And I did in the morning as I was commanded.

He did not cry. He did not mourn. But he followed the Lord in obedience.

It's something beyond Ezekiel that gave him the capability of doing that. It was a faith that saved. It was a faith that moved.

It was a faith that could stand strong in the face of adversity. Well, it not only leads to this erring heart, but there's a second step, and that is what I call an evil heart. We see that right there in the text.

It's very clear. An evil heart of unbelief in verse 12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.

Now, when he talks about brethren here, he's not speaking of the church, the saints, but rather it's the brethren in general. And he's saying to these Judaizers that have made some measure of acknowledgement of faith in Christ, he's warning them, and he's saying to these professors not to allow an evil heart of unbelief to develop in them. What is an evil heart of unbelief? You know what I believe? I believe in mine and your life as professors in Jesus Christ.

There's only one sin that we have to be on constant guard against when walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and that is the sin of unbelief. Unbelief. Do we really believe God? Where is your faith tonight? If you say you really believe God, my friend, you will not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, for you see your attendance is an acknowledgement of your faith.

If you say you really believe God and you care for the welfare of your soul and even your own children, you take to heart your responsibility of operating under the standard of God's holiness. That I want to please God with all my heart. I want to walk, Colossians 1 and verse 10, unto all pleasing.

Because you see, when we do that, we manifest our faith. There was a man apparently that James perhaps was not too impressed with. And he came boasting in his faith, but there was no works to accompany that.

Remember there in the book of James? The epistle of James? Yea, a man may say thou hast faith, but he said I have works. He challenges the fellow. He says, show me your faith without your works and I will show thee my faith by my works.

Where is your faith in the midst of tribulation and temptation and persecution? But also it leads to an egocentric heart. See, it begins with an erring heart. It progresses into an evil heart.

It culminates into an egocentric heart. Verse 13, we see it in the term hardened heart. Lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.

And then he says, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. What are some of the manifestations of the deceitfulness of sin when we've been slain by the blindness of our own sin? Just a few here. First of all, because you start making compromises even in small areas of obedience, it takes the edge off your conscience and makes you insensible to your sin.

You don't see sin as quickly and as clearly as you once did. Another thing, you start finding it much, much easier to justify yourself, justify your behavior, why you watch the things you do on television and why you say the things you do even in a light, contemptible manner. You can easily justify that.

It leads to blame shifting. You blame your circumstances. You blame your past.

You blame something that happened. You know that somebody set you up for in the past. You're always shifting blame to other people.

This is an evidence of a hard heart. It leads to blame shifting. But there's another thing I want you to see in our text here, and that's what I'm going to call the warranty of an unwavering profession.

The assurance, the confirmation, this warranty of an unwavering profession. Look at Hebrews 3 and verse 14. He says, now listen, this is a great promise.

We are made partakers of Christ. We know that we enjoy all of Christ, that we're a part of Him, if there's the condition, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. And then once again, there is that promise that precedes that in verse 6. But Christ is the Son over His house, whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the whole firmament of the end.

Listen, friend, we don't hold fast that confidence to be converted. But if we're truly in Christ, we assure ourselves that we are knowing the reality of a body and partaking of Christ, because we continue in the faith. We continue to obey.

We continue to repent. We continue to consecrate ourselves. We continue to die to self.

We continue to love the brethren. We continue to love our enemies. These are obediences that accompany the life of the true child of God.

Listen to the words of Albert Barnes. Boy, this is powerful. Listen very, very carefully.

Speaking of the Israelites there in the wilderness for those 40 years, he says their long trial of 40 years had been sufficient to show that it was a characteristic of the people that they were disposed to wonder from God. Forty years are enough to show what the character is. Now, can I share something with you? Today, all I could think of when I looked in the face of Brother Mater, he's a dying man.

He's a greatly beloved man. By this preacher that stands before you tonight, but all I could think about was Psalm 92. They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of their God.

They shall still bring forth fruit in old age. They shall be fat and flourishing to show that the Lord, He is upright. But you know, friend, most old people I meet in churches these days, they're full of bitterness and cynicism and they've got a critical spirit and harsh and hard and impatient.

I wonder who they've been planted by and what they've been planted in. You see, the older you get, you shouldn't be increasingly getting bitter. You ought to be getting better, more Christlike.

And Albert Barnes goes on to say this, they had seen His works. They had been called to obey Him. They had received His law, and yet their conduct during that time had shown that they were not disposed to obey Him.

So, he says, now he turns it to the individual, so if of an individual, a man who has lived in sin forty years, who during all that time has rebelled against God and disregarded all His appeals, who has lived for himself and not for his Maker, has shown what his character is, longer time is unnecessary, and if God should then cut him down and consign him to hell, he could not be blamed for doing it. A man who during forty years will live in sin and resist all the appeals of God, shows what is in his heart, and no injustice is done if then he is summoned before God and he swears that he shall not enter into His rest. Profound.

Now, in closing tonight, this is my conclusion. What have we learned from what we've gleaned from the Scripture? I'm going to give you five or six things, and then we'll pray together. First of all, you must

understand that testing reveals the faith, the faith of a true believer.

The trials, the persecution, the oppression, the testings of your life will reveal the authenticity of your faith. If you're constantly vacillating, you're unstable in all of your ways, you're reacting with unbelief and bitterness and hurt and discontentment in life, friend, it is not a good sign that you have the faith of Christ more than likely you've got a human or a demon faith. Notice once again the text.

But Christ is the Son over His own house whose house are we if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the whole firmament at the end. Years ago, I had a pastor friend of mine who went by and saw an evangelist. This guy was used seemingly all over the United States, everywhere he would go.

There was a season in his ministry this evangelist that they were seeing tremendous things happen in local churches. Many people profess Christ as their Savior and people were broken and homes were put back together that had been fragmented by Satan in the world. And this pastor friend of mine told me that this evangelist, he said, I had been with him on a number of occasions, and he said, Brother Don, he was an epistle of great joy.

He said, man, he was always enthusiastic about the things of God, very zealous, you know, to serve the Lord and always encouraging other people to do it and a big smile on his face and very jovial all the time. And he said, one day, he said, he no longer had a ministry because he had a stroke. And it left him bedridden.

And he said, I was passing through his town in Pennsylvania, and I stopped in to see him. And I greeted his wife at the door and said, yes, he's in the bedroom. He's in the bed.

And so she ushered me into the bedroom there. And he said, I sat down beside that bed, and I knew this guy from previous years. The number of times I'd been with him, he was always the same.

He was so full of joy and life in the Lord. And he said, as I talked to him, he said it only took ten minutes, and he said I could see the lowering of his countenance. And as he began to talk, he was so full of hurt and bitterness toward God that his words and his very tone revealed to me at best a confusing profession of faith.

He said, I really thought this guy was saved. And he said, maybe he was. But he said, I tell you, everything that he did that day, everything that he said, clouded the picture.

And he said, I left that day his room wondering if this man had ever really been born again, because once again, they that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of their God. They're going to endure to the end. If you're in Christ, you're going to endure to the end.

Listen, friend, you may stumble. You may stagger. Yes, there may be storms and seasons in your life where you're greatly tried, but I tell you, suddenly there's something within you that takes hold and you rise above that thing because you know that God is the One that is the sustainer of your spiritual life and He is able to help you and to keep you persevering in the midst of the most severe trials of life.

There's a second thing I want to just mention in closing and that is, understand this. Saving or genuine faith is evidenced by the person's continuing in the fruit of conversion. That's so important.

So, pardon me if I reiterate something that maybe you say, boy, if you reiterate that, it's just boring to me. For those that perhaps have not heard this before, I just want to reiterate it. Okay, listen.

Saving faith or genuine faith is evidenced by your willingness to continue in the fruit of conversion. Now, what is that fruit? We mentioned a little while ago. It's faith.

It's repentance. It's humility. It's self-denial.

It's holiness. It's receiving reproof, whether it's from the pulpit or an individual, maybe a child in your own home reproves you of something that's not right in your life. Can you receive it? Obedience, godliness, etc.

Notice once again the text. Hebrews 3 and verse 6. But Christ is a Son over His house whose house are we if we hold fast to confidence. What does it mean to hold fast to confidence? We continue in these marks of conversion.

We continue in these signs, these evidences of conversion. Paul would look upon the life of Demas and he would say, Demas hath forsaken me having loved this present world. It was not a good outcome.

The way he died or the end of his life made his profession suspect. We had, as I mentioned to you yesterday, Dr. Ted Tripp who wrote the book *Shepherding a Child's Heart* for a conference years ago. And Ted said something in one of the sessions I'll never forget.

They have three children, he and Margie. And he said, Margie and I are convinced now at this time in our life that if we were to fall away from the faith, if we were to depart from the faith, all three of our children would stand strong and go on with Christ. Only Christ can do that.

Do you have that confidence? That if you were to fall away from the faith, if you were to apostatize, would your children continue on with Christ? Here's a third thing. Understand that consistent failure in the trials and temptations and persecutions of life reveals an unregenerate heart in your life. Hebrews 3, verses 10-12 Wherefore, I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do always err in their heart.

They always do it. And they have not known my way. If so, he says, I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest.

Ladies, if you go to your Sovereign Grace Conference next year, I believe you're part of that fellowship there. And when you go, Carol Trahan will be the keynote speaker to the women. I'm just amazed at Carol's life.

Here is a woman that was saved out of the occult and immorality. Gross immorality. And God set her upon the rock.

And He delivered her from the muck and mire of this present evil world. And here she gets married to a man who seems to be a solid Christian. At the time when they first get married, everything seems to be going well, and suddenly his true colors show.

There's some problems there in their relationship, but yet she's willing to overlook that because of love. Well, down the road, they have three children. And what began to surface one day was this man was exposed in molesting a child in their church.

When this came out, when it hit the fan, he came totally clean and they found out he had molested two of his own children. Carol said that one night following this, he said to her, Carol said, I am dirt. I am the worst of the dirt.

The next morning, he left without telling her where he was going. And two days later, their pastor came to her house and told her that her husband had committed suicide. She had to raise three children all by herself dealing, reeling from the trauma of a very immoral husband.

You know what she did? She didn't go to the local psychiatrist. She didn't go to a quote-unquote Christian counselor. I'm not opposed to counseling as long as it's synthetic.

But she didn't need that. She went straight to God. And I asked her, I said, Carol, I've heard preachers, whether they're evangelists or pastors, and I've heard men and ladies who could quote large portions of Scripture, but I said when you quote, it's like it's life to you.

When it comes across in your communication, it comes across in a spiritual dimension that I'm not used to. I said, why is that? There's such power and anointing behind it. And she said, Brother Curran, when I would put my three children to bed at night, I would crawl up on the couch with my Bible and I would weep before the Lord.

And she said all I had was the promises of God. And she said I so bathed myself in the promises of God that the natural outcome of that was they just became a part of me. She said I've never been good at memorizing Scripture just for the sake of memorizing.

But she said the reason I can quote such large passages of Scripture is because that's all I had. I took refuge in the promises of God. And that's what salvation will do.

Is Carol Trahan perfect? Absolutely not. She would tell you quickly and heartily that she struggles in areas, but I tell you, friend, once again, we're not talking about perfection. We're talking about perseverance.

How do you respond to the trials of life? Let me give you a few more things to consider. Number four, faithfulness to Christ. Faithfulness to Christ does not earn salvation, but reveals it.

Listen, you come to Christ as you are tonight as just a little babe. Maybe your very attitude is I don't know how to go out or come in. And I don't understand it all.

But I know that Christ died for sinners. And I come to Him as I am. And I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I'm willing to follow Him all the days of my life. But, friend, listen, as you make that commitment to Christ, as you look to Him for salvation, the days that follow there will be a great season of affliction, of adversity. But when the trials and the hardships come, listen, friend, it's going to reveal whether you're in Christ Jesus.

Your faithfulness to Christ, your holding fast to the end, that doesn't earn you salvation. You've got to understand a lot of people will misinterpret this. Don't misinterpret what I'm saying.

It only reveals the genuineness of your faith. You've got to understand that. For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast.

The word hold there means continue to live righteously, obediently before the Lord. Number five, overall, listen, overall, saving faith will persevere through the trials and temptations of life. Overall.

Once again, we're not looking for perfection, but overall, saving faith will persevere, endure through the trials and temptations of life. Hebrews 3, verse 10, Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do always err in their heart. They always err in their heart.

But I ask you, overall, overall, is your path, is your pattern of living, is your behavior characterized by righteousness or unrighteousness? You know, I love the words of John Bunyan. Did you ever hear his definition of perseverance? John Bunyan says, Perseverance is one hand on the plow and the other hand wiping the tears away. Storms are going to come.

Trials are going to come. You're going to be tempted to compromise your morality, your sexual purity. You're going to be tempted to compromise your time, not spend it wisely for the glory of God.

But you continue just to hold your hand to the plow and you just keep on wiping the tears away. It's going to be tough, but I tell you, God will give you supernatural, sovereign, sustaining grace to help you get through it. I can assure you.

And if you do get through it, guess what you're the recipient of? A beautiful, full abundance of assurance. Number six. This is a final thought.

Continuing in godliness. Continuing in godliness or obedience is our ground of assurance. Jonathan Edwards made this statement.

He said, The people who make a decision and live their life in a reckless, rebellious way, while they may say and testify, I know Christ. I'm believing in Christ. I know I'm going to heaven.

He said those people need to be gravely concerned. They need to be gravely concerned. But it's the people that while they stagger and they stumble and at times they vacillate, but yet they keep on pressing on.

They keep on enduring. He said in that enduring, we receive our greatest assurance that we're in Christ. It's like I told my friend one day, Charles Leiter, who pastors out in Kirksville, Missouri.

I said, Charles, what do you say to these people? He said, yeah, I know Christ is my Savior, but they're not enduring. They're not persevering through the trials of life. And I remember during our conversation, he made this comment.

He said, you know, Brother Don, you share that truth, you share that promise with a religiously lost person, and they'll wallow in it like a pig. But he said when you share that Christ still loves them in spite of their sin, in spite of their failures, he said if a person is truly saved, they can't go on without appreciating the marvelous grace of God in their life, and it will sober them up to determine that I'm going to walk the way of holiness no matter how many times I've failed. That's your assurance, friend.

That's your assurance. Today, if you'll hear His voice, harden not your hearts. I'm not here to frighten anyone.

I'm really trying these days to be an epistle of encouragement. I have a spirit of Barnabas in my heart with people. But I think one of the best ways I can encourage people is to tell them the truth.

If you're not persevering through life, I'm going to keep on going to church. I'm going to keep on seeking God. I'm going to keep on engaging in prayer meetings at night.

I'm going to keep on consecrating myself. I'm going to keep on dying to self. Even though I fail at times so miserably, yet that precious grace of God that was embodied and expressed through the finished work of Christ constrains me, the love of Christ constrains me to continue on.

Then, listen, you'll have assurance of your faith. Then you can rest assured that yes, in spite of the fact that three kingdoms are diametrically opposed to me, the world, the flesh, and the devil, yet there's a principle within me and a power and a presence within me, Christ in me, the hope of glory, that enables me to persevere on. And whether I have all my expectations met or not, as long as He's pleased, that's all that matters.

I want Him to be glorified. Shall we pray together? Thank You, dear Lord, for just these things that we've gleaned from the text, Lord. I know this dear pastor, Lord, and others can expound it word for word.

And Lord, we need that. We need that foundation. Lord, as we've just sort of gleaned some things from the text tonight and then made an application, I pray that these major themes that we've camped out on and constantly reiterated in the hearing of the people, that Holy Spirit, You would take them and penetrate our hearts with them.

And may, Lord, our hearts experience a new resolve to rise up and continue on in our faith, knowing, O God, that they that endure to the end, the same shall be saved. It's not a miserable existence. It's not a cumbersome legal thing, though we want to do it when we recognize the price that was paid on our behalf.

And Christ, His worthiness, His righteousness is pouring forth of His life for us that love constrains us to walk with God. So, God, give Your people assurance tonight. Cast out every doubt.

Pull down every uncertainty, Lord. And may we all understand that perhaps our greatest assurance is the daily conflict that we endure in the face of life's trials. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

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