Well, good morning and welcome to our second service. On Sunday mornings we have two services, the first of which is our weekly Bible Prophecy Update. And second service is the sermon where we have our verse-by-verse study through the Word of God.

Today we are in Hebrews, and Lord willing, we'll finish Chapter 10. And so we'll invite you at this time to join with us, those of you that are here, if you're able, I'll ask you to stand. You can follow along as I read. If not, where you're seated is fine.

Beginning in verse 26, the writer of Hebrews by the Holy Spirit - I just have to warn you, it's going to be a little bit intense here for a minute. "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume [notice] the enemies of God.

Anyone [verse 28] who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

For we know Him who said, 'It is mine to avenge, I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

How you doing so far? I told you. All right, thank God for verse 32.

"Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution. At other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated.

You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised.

For [verse 37] 'in just a little while [can't wait] He who is coming will come, and will not delay.' And, 'but by righteousness one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.' But [verse 39] we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved."

Should we just close the prayer? Let's pray.

Thank You, Lord, so much for Your Word. Wow, just wow! Lord, we readily admit that we have before us a portion of scripture that requires the Holy Spirit to give us understanding. Clearly, we have this here in our Bibles for a reason, and it's applicable to our lives today.

So Lord, we need for the Holy Spirit to show us what You want us to see here, and to hear and heed the truth that is here. So Lord, will You speak into our lives in our time together in Your Word today, we pray in Jesus' name, amen and amen. You can be seated, thank you.

So I want to talk with you about how God is using everything that is happening in the world today to produce in us the much-needed perseverance to endure to the end. That's what the text that is before us today is about.

The writer of Hebrews is encouraging these Hebrew Christians to persevere in the face of unspeakable difficulty. Keep in mind in that day, at that time, if you, as we have just sung together, decided to follow Jesus, though none go with you still you will follow, the world behind you, the cross before you, I have decided to follow Jesus, you lost everything. It costs you everything.

Your family disowned you. Your employer terminated you. And you were persecuted. The difficulty was unspeakable, as we're going to see here in a moment. And if this weren't bad enough, their brethren, those who had not decided to follow Jesus, but instead rejected Jesus for whom there is no sacrifice, as we'll see next, they were pressuring these Hebrew Christians to go back to Judaism.

The temple had not yet been destroyed. This is prior to the year 70 AD when the prophecy that Jesus himself had spoken in the gospels, particularly in Matthew's gospel. There they are on the Mount of Olives, and the disciples are asking Jesus, telling Jesus, showing Jesus the temple as if Jesus didn't know the temple was there. And they said, look at the temple.

And Jesus says, well, yeah, let's look at the temple, get a good look at the temple because there's coming a day very soon, by the way, where not one stone on that temple will be upon another. And sure enough, in 70 AD that prophecy was fulfilled precisely as Jesus said it would.

See they had gold in between those stones there in the temple. And when the Romans had destroyed Jerusalem and destroyed the temple, they wanted the gold in between the stones. So what are they going to do? Well, they got to remove the stones to get all the gold. So exactly as Jesus said, not one stone will be upon another.

Well, that hadn't happened yet. So as you might imagine, these Hebrew Christians are really struggling. The pressure was intense, the persecution immense. And there were those who had not accepted Jesus Christ. And they were pressuring them, they were persecuting them.

And the writer of Hebrews, true to form, is going to hit this head on. And first and foremost, he's going to address those who had rejected Jesus, and it is very intense. He explicitly, by the Spirit of God in no uncertain terms, says that those who deliberately reject the sacrifice of Jesus Christ - see they were still doing the temple sacrifices - and in so doing, they were rejecting Jesus Christ as the only sacrifice. And by rejecting Jesus Christ as the only sacrifice, they are left with no sacrifice. That's what he's saying.

It's important to understand that God has given us all free will. He does not force His will on us. If you think about it, if He did that, then that would not be love. That would be fear. Think about it like this. I often think about this.

Why did God, when Lucifer in heaven declared in his pride that he would ascend his throne above the Most High - if I was God, I would have just said, oh really? Zap! And he's gone. That's it. That's it. You just end that - anybody else want to ascend their throne above the Most High?

I would've put an end to it right there, which is why I'm not God. And thank God I'm not God. Thank God you're not God either, so don't look all spiritual.

So why did God let it play out? Why did God cast out Lucifer and a third of the angels in heaven? Because they made their choice. They rejected the Most High God, their choice. So Lucifer is cast down to earth.

Now God creates Adam and Eve, creates the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and He tells Adam, commands Adam to subdue, meaning that there's somebody that needs to be subdued, the devil who has been cast down to earth. And so He creates the Garden of Eden.

Can't even imagine, no mind could ever comprehend the magnificence and the splendor and the perfection and the beauty of the Garden of Eden.

And He says to them, all of these trees you can eat from. But this one tree thou shalt not eat from. It's like this, it's like don't look in that hole through that window.

Why?

Don't eat from that tree.

Why not?

And that's exactly what Lucifer did. Of all the trees in the garden, you can eat freely, but of this one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat; in the day that thouest eatest from it, thou shalt surely die.

They were given a choice. Now think about it. If God had taken my advice, which we talked about on Thursday night, by the way in Isaiah 40. Who has counseled the Lord, who has advised the Lord?

Okay, I've tried a few times.

You know, God, have You considered this?

No, I haven't, JD, that's amazing. I'm so glad you brought that up.

So if God had taken my advice and just zapped Lucifer right on the spot, you know what would have happened? The whole heavenly host would have said, oh, did you see what God did? We better be very careful. And now all of a sudden, they're worshiping Him out of fear, not love, not by choice. And the same thing is true with the garden.

Can you imagine if God had created the Garden of Eden and said all the trees you can eat of?

All of them?

Yeah.

Do they have drive-thru? Fine, whatever.

No tree to not eat from. There's no choice. I'm walking in victory in that garden. I'm never disobeying God because there's nothing to disobey God with. I am walking in victory. I am walking in obedience until He told me about that tree.

We have a problem now, and we have a devil now in the form of a serpent who comes up to Eve, interesting, and (hissing) sss-suggests that maybe God is holding out on them. God doesn't want you to eat from that tree because He knows that if you eat from it, you're going to be like Him. Your eyes will be opened. He's holding out on you.

And those three words are three words that are repackaged today, a thousand times a day. Hath God said [question mark]? Doubt.

Hmm. So now I have a choice. What am I going to do?

And God's not in heaven - never imagine God in heaven saying, Pick behind door number one, not door number two. Don't do it! Don't do it!

No, He's given us free will because God wants us to choose Him and worship Him because we love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

You know, I think about my wife. We've been married for 33 years this year. And I can't imagine. Well, actually, I can imagine. What if there were no other choices and she had to marry me? What kind of a relationship would that be?

I know that's a very crazy illustration, but it's the best I got. If you got a better one, let me know. I'd be happy to talk to you about it.

No, think about that; she chose me. Of course I chose her, but you get the point. It was a choice out of love. And that's what God wants, is He wants us to choose Him and worship Him because we love Him.

Now, what about those who reject Him after all He's done? God became a man. And He went to that cross and He died for us because of His love for us. He became the sacrifice for our sins, and then we don't choose Him?

Then the writer of Hebrews would ask, well then you don't have any sacrifice because He's the only sacrifice and you've rejected Him, and not only have you rejected Him, you've blasphemed and insulted the Spirit of grace. And that's not all.

If that weren't bad enough, you've trampled underfoot the Son of God. And it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of God.

Now, why is the writer of Hebrews saying this before he says what he's going to say next? Because he's drawing this stark contrast between those rejecting Jesus and the Hebrew Christians who not only were accepting Jesus but as such were expecting Jesus. That's not a play on words. Stay with me on this.

I want to draw your attention to something that the writer is referring to. He's kind of going into the past tense here, and he's really commending them for their endurance in the past. And we have an interesting detail in the text, really a list of the things that they had past tense endured: great conflict, suffering, insult, persecution, humiliation. You got me at great conflict. I'm, you know...but all of that?

Oh, and then there's more because they also, it appears, joyfully endured. Hang on to that one. Joyfully endured the great loss of having their property confiscated along with those who were in prison.

Whoa, wait a second, I didn't sign up for that.

When I decided to follow Jesus, I was told (singing) Oh, happy day all my problems go away.

I've never known problems until I came to Christ. The forces of hell, the demons from hell were against me.

So let's talk about this for a moment. I could probably have a little bit of an easier time getting to endured the great loss of having their houses and property confiscated, but they did it joyfully?

Okay, wait a minute. I don't know if I would endure it joyfully. I mean, this is going to be a stretch for me just to endure it. That's my property; I have rights, you know.

Well, that's what was happening to them. Why? Because they had accepted Jesus, not rejected Jesus. They had accepted His sacrifice for their sentence.

Now the writer goes on to encourage them, saying - now this is really important, please don't miss this - The enemy does not want you to hear this because this is what the writer of Hebrews is telling them then, and this is what the Spirit is saying to us now as the church. If you endured all that, then you can endure anything by faith just a little bit longer.

How much longer?

Oh, until the One who's coming comes, and He will not delay.

This was almost 2000 years ago. And the one thing, and we talk about this in the context of Bible prophecy, and I love this about these men that God used to write, inspired by the Holy Spirit, particularly the Apostle Paul. They all lived with the anticipation, even expectation that Jesus could come at any time.

How about when Paul writes to the Thessalonians? He says, "We who are alive and remain will be caught up," raptured up, Harpazo in the Greek, to meet the Lord in the air.

We? Paul, I think you're talking about me, not we. Because that was then; this is now.

No, we who are alive and remain. Paul thought the Lord's return was in his lifetime, and he lived his life like that, with that expectation that the Lord could come at any time. We who are alive and remain. And then He says, "Therefore, encourage one another with these words."

He's trying to encourage them.

Why?

Because they're very discouraged. I know that's deeply profound.

Why do you read in the scriptures "Do not be afraid" unless it's to someone who is afraid? Why do you read in the Scriptures "Don't be discouraged" unless you're discouraged? Be encouraged.

And it's not just this empty thing of oh, just be encouraged. Okay, I'll start tomorrow, thank you very much, that makes it all better. Don't be afraid.

Oh, what was I thinking? I'm just thinking of that song. You're going to hate me for this. I hate me for this. "Don't worry. Be happy."

Ah, see, I hate that song because it's wrong. The song is wrong because the song just says don't worry, be happy.

Oh, thank you so much. Wait, what? You're telling me what to do, or what not to do, but you're not telling me why. Why should I not worry? Why should I be encouraged? Why should I be happy?

I'm so sorry, by the way, I'm looking at some of you thinking thank you so much, Pastor, I cannot get that song out of my mind. It took me years to stop thinking about that song.

It's really catchy, isn't it?

Okay, that's enough of that.

Don't worry, be encouraged, and here's why. Jesus is coming. And this is just a little while.

The Apostle Paul would say it like this: The temporary, light afflictions.

Temporary light afflictions? Wait, Paul, was that after your third shipwreck? Temporary, light afflictions?

Listen, if anybody earned the right to say what Paul said, it was Paul. He earned the right to say that. He persevered and endured.

How, how, how? Why, why, why? Don't just tell me "what," tell me "why" and please include "how."

It's the "how" of the Holy Spirit to do the "what" of God's Word. And the "what" here today in God's Word is to persevere, endure to the end. That's the "what."

Why?

Because Jesus is coming just a little bit longer, just endure.

How?

Ah, that's the best part, by faith. Stay with me.

I think I'd be grossly remiss if I didn't point this out. It has to do with the writer quoting the Prophet Habakkuk Chapter 2:4, you know it well, "The just shall live by faith." This is so important that it's quoted no less than three times in the New Testament. One time is here in our text in Hebrews 10:38. Another is in Galatians Chapter 3:11. And another is when the Apostle Paul writes His letter to the church in Rome, Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith." That's the "how."

Okay, here's a question. Why is there such an emphasis on this? Why is there such an emphasis placed on the righteous living by faith?

Well, we know and we're going to see, Lord willing, when we get to Chapter 11 that without faith, it's impossible to please God. I don't think there's anybody here that doesn't want to please God. We all want to be pleasing in the sight of the Lord, our ways pleasing to Him, and we want to please Him because we love Him.

Well, if without faith it's impossible to please Him, does that mean that with faith it's possible to please the Lord?

Oh, yeah. Have you noticed in the gospels how Jesus would stop everything and point out someone's faith? I mean, He would draw everybody's attention to- "I have not seen such faith like this in all of Israel." If someone had faith, Jesus made it a point to point out their faith.

I was thinking this last week. It was in a different context. But Jesus makes this stunning statement. He says, "Let it be done unto you according to your faith."

Now, first, it's okay, yeah, according to your faith, let it be done unto you.

Okay, wait. In other words, proportionate to my faith that's what's going to be done? Oh, oh, now I'm starting to get it. So if it's according to my faith, then when I don't have faith or live by faith, then wouldn't it stand to reason that it won't be done according to the faith that I don't have?

Yes.

You know, I always, whenever it comes to teaching, as is my privilege, the Word of God concerning faith, I always just... The word "faith," false teaching has done so much damage.

Because under the banner of name it/claim it, if you just had enough faith. Blab it/grab it, and then it doesn't happen. Well you didn't have enough faith.

It's done so much damage, and here's what we've done. And I'll put myself in that camp, sadly. We've thrown the proverbial "baby of faith" out with the "bathwater of that false teaching."

We've gone to the other extreme. So now you sit under the teaching of a pastor who is talking about faith. You're going, oh, no, you're not one of those, are you? Oh, if you just have enough faith. And I just... boy, the enemy has in large measure succeeded in getting us as Christians to not believe God by faith because after all, he comes to steal, kill, and destroy. And he has stolen that from us, and he's robbed us of all that is ours by faith.

The righteous live by faith; the just live by faith. I'd like to know a little bit more about this. You see, scripture is clear as to where it is that I get faith.

Where can I get me some of this faith?

Faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God. Now when I have faith, that faith is going to get tested. You're going to be put to the test.

Oh, where's that?

Well, it's in the fine print, paragraph 3. You're going to have your faith tested.

Well, what's up with that?

Believe you me; you want your faith tested. Do you want to know why? Because the testing of your faith is what produces the perseverance and the endurance. In other words, absent those trials in our lives testing our faith, we have little hope of enduring the very trials God uses in our life to produce the perseverance.

Can I say it like this? No faith, no endurance; no faith, no perseverance. You put that faith to the test, and in testing that faith, it's the producing of that which I need to get through the trial I'm in.

This is 1 Corinthians 10:13, by the way. Oh, you know this verse, but you've heard it paraphrased in that popular saying, "God won't give you more than you can handle." Don't you just love it when somebody that's just not going through a trial comes to you with that smile on their face?

You're go through the trial of your life; they say to you, "God won't give you any more than you can handle." I know that. That's 1 Corinthians 10:13; you know this verse.

Let me just kind of paraphrase it a little bit differently if you don't mind. No trial, same word in the original, tribulation, temptation will overtake you, seize you, but such as is common to man. That with the trial, God will provide a way of escape so that you can bear up under it.

Now, we need to take a closer look at this.

What the Apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit is saying is you're in this trial, right?

Yeah. This is a fiery trial? It's a very fiery trial, very hard. I need perseverance. I need endurance.

Okay, God's going to give you patience, endurance, patient endurance, and perseverance.

He is?

Yeah.

When?

Now.

How?

By going through it.

Wait, stop, no, no, that's not what... I want Him to take me out of it, not get me through it.

Oh, okay, He might do that for you, but you don't want Him to do that for you, because the endurance and the perseverance that you need only comes by going through it because that's what is produced by going through it. If He takes you out of it - here's a good example.

You know this well, this illustration. I think it is just a perfect illustration. You've all heard the story about the little boy that comes upon this caterpillar in the cocoon, and it sees the caterpillar struggling and you know, trying to get out.

And the little boy's like, man, I'm going to help this poor little caterpillar out. So he begins to take the cocoon and peel it back, and he's like, Okay, you're free, and the caterpillar is going... He dies. It doesn't fly. The caterpillar doesn't turn into a butterfly, the metamorphosis, and flies, it dies.

Why?

Because the strength that it needed to become a butterfly came with the struggle and the trial in the cocoon.

So you have all these caterpillar Christians: Get me out of this.

No, I want to give you wings.

Isaiah 40: "Those that wait on the Lord shall mount up with wings like eagles."

Forget butterflies. Butterflies are doing this. I've never seen an eagle doing this. I see eagles going, yeah; they're soaring! That's what I'm talking about.

But why would you want to?

I mean, so that's the only ...?

Yeah.

It's in the cocoon, the trial?

Yeah.

That's how?

Yeah.

Is there any other way?

No.

Oh, I wish they would have a prescription. You know, just see those ads on TV because that's how we are, right? Just that famous, humorous quip. God give me patience and give it to me now. It doesn't work like that.

If you want patient endurance, think about it. You're going to have to be patient and endure it. Because that's where it comes from.

I want to come back to this real quick; where the writer of Hebrews says that you joyfully endured the confiscation of your property. Because again, when You decided to follow Jesus, you lost everything.

That's why it is, by the way, in our day, and I don't mean to bash on the church. Man, we got a really good; we got it too good in some ways. In that day when you decided to follow Jesus and picked up your cross, you had to count the cost because there was a cost to count.

And it was a death to self. It was a denying self. It was losing; the one who loses His life, Jesus says, will find it and save it. The one who tries to save it will lose it. They really understood that in their day, I'm just saying.

But how did they do it joyfully? James, Chapter 1. You know these verses well too.

I want to read verses 2-4, and please hear me out on this. I say this in the sanctified sense that I really - "hate's" a strong word, but I really don't like this passage. Are we okay? Do you look at me differently now? I, especially as a young believer, I'm like are you kidding me? Are you kidding me right now?

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters whenever you face trials of many kinds."

Really, pure joy when I encounter trials? I'm going to look it up in the original. That's got to be a poor translation. I think in the original it must say consider it pure hell my brothers and sisters whenever you face trials of many kinds.

No, it's pure joy. Okay, how?

Here's how.

Why?

Here's why. "Because [verse 3] you know" [know, key word]. Not hope, not I sure wish, I sure hope

No, you know.

Oh, by the way, that's another famous verse we love to quote. Romans 8:28, "For we know that all things work together for the good to them that love God and are called..."

Know, know, not hope, not sure kind of, you know hoping this thing will work out for the good.

No, you know. You know.

And here it is, listen. "The testing [testing] of your faith produces perseverance."

Okay, I'm going to read it again because you're looking at me like that. "The testing of your faith produces perseverance."

You know how it is sometimes when you pray, and then God answers the prayer and you're like, God, what are You doing?

And it's like God has to remind you. You prayed. You asked Me to do this.

I did, when?

So He's got to send you a PDF file attached on an email of your prayer requests and your prayer journal. Right here. You asked Me for patience.

I didn't know You were going to answer it like that.

You asked Me for perseverance. Well, I answered your prayer. You want perseverance; it comes by the testing of your faith. And He doesn't stop there, verse 4, and this is a key word too.

And sometimes I think we do er greatly in reading the Word of God. Where we read past something without really letting it sink in. And such is the case with verse 4, starting with the word "let."

Oh, I don't "let."

In other words, I can stop it.

No, don't stop it. Let it.

Let what?

"Let perseverance finish its work." It's not finished.

Is it going to be finished soon?

"Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Stop right there. Have you ever prayed that God would mature you in Christ? Be careful what you pray for. That's how He's going to do it. You're asking for patience, you're asking for perseverance, you're asking for endurance, you're asking for strength.

Okay, there you go. Here's how it's going to come.

I think about Isaiah again, of course, we're in Isaiah on Thursday nights. I think a lot about Isaiah lately. I can't wait to meet him. I think we'll be meeting him soon along with everybody else.

He says, "That God has chosen the furnace of affliction to refine us."

Listen, I want to be refined, but not with the furnace of affliction.

Can't You refine me on the beaches of Oahu?

I'm going to refine you.

All right.

I'm going to refine you... enter in the furnace.

No, I don't want to be refined this way! I want the refining; I don't want the furnace of affliction to refine me!

No, if you want to be refined, it's the furnace of affliction. You want perseverance? It's the testing of your faith.

So you're in a trial, and we're in a trial, right? I mean, I speak collectively, broadly, in the broad sense. And listen, I say this in love. It's going to get worse. Oh, I'm so sorry.

So in the Prophecy Update today, we talked about 2 Timothy where Paul writes and says that in the last days, this will be a prophecy, a prophetic description of the condition of the church in the last days.

That there's coming a day, that day is here and now, where they will not put up with sound teaching, sound doctrine. Instead, they will flock in great numbers to teachers that will tell them what their ears are itching to hear. They will not put up with sound doctrine.

This is sound doctrine. This is sound truth. This is the Word of God.

And listen, if I could, I would get up here behind this pulpit I won't - I'm capable of it - and just speak smooth things. You're all good. It's all good. It's all going to be okay.

(Singing) Don't worry.

I'm sorry, that was the last one; I won't do that again.

Instead, I have to be true to the Word of God. And I have to tell you the truth. And when I read those letters to the seven churches in Revelation, I mean, it just...the hair, whatever's left in the back of my head is standing on end.

Would you agree with me, and I'll close with this, that our faith is going to be tested like never before? Don't fight it because that testing of our faith is going to produce the very thing that we need in the trial we're in, in the days ahead.

God is going to give us the endurance to the end. He can't not. Whatever it is you're going through, as hard as it is, as bad as it is, and as worse as it's getting, He will see you through until the end, just like the writer of Hebrews, just a little while longer. You just hang on.

To the Church of Philadelphia, "I know you have little strength." Just hang on. I'm coming, I'm coming. I know you have little strength. I know you're barely hanging on. Just a little bit longer, a little bit.

Isn't that what we say to our kids? Just wait, you'll see, a little bit longer.

How much longer?

Just wait, you'll see. He's coming. He's coming.

Why don't you stand; we'll have the worship team come up. So grateful for God's Word. It's the Word of Life, yeah? The bread of life. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God." This is our sustenance.

Lord, thank You so much. Thank You for Your Word and Lord, thank You for Your truth. You are the truth, Jesus. You as the truth, are the One who sets us free. And whom the Son has set free is free indeed.

Lord, I am keenly aware that there are many who are really struggling. And yeah, the humor's great, and I love to laugh and laughing is medicinal. But Lord, for anyone that's here or watching online that's just... I mean, going through it and it's just really, really hard, I just pray You'll reveal Yourself to them in a fresh and new way.

Just love on them and encourage them and strengthen them and remind them that You're going to see them through that which they are going through. You will see them through, and You will give them the endurance, and the perseverance to the end, in Jesus' name, amen.