

Script: Pastor Frank Johnson  
What More Can God Say? (On Hebrews)  
“Hold On [Part III]” (Hebrews 10:26-39)  
Parallel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30

Take a first look.

I. JESUS CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO BE FINISHERS. There will never come a time short of heaven that we should stop giving our all for what God has called us to become. **When Bill Veeck, perhaps the most creative promoter that baseball has ever seen, bought the Chicago White Sox in 1975, he hired as coach Minnie Minoso**, who starred for the Sox as well as other teams in the '40s, '50s and '60s. Always one for crowd pleasing events, Veeck decided a year later to play Minoso, who was in his fifties, in several games.

Mike Veeck, Bill's son, recalls seeing Minoso bat in one of those games. “He hit a ground ball, a pitiful, routine, ground ball. It was one of the greatest things I've ever seen. Ask anyone who was there. He ran out that ground ball with such passion, with such pride. It was stirring, inspirational, just to see him run. The fans gave him a standing ovation.” Minnie Minoso gave it his all, and in so doing made a ground out more inspiring and more significant for others than a home run.<sup>1</sup>

II. When people view us doing the routine tasks of life, would they associate us with Jesus? Would God see us giving it our best, even when it seems like we just hit a pitiful ground out?

Take a closer look at Hebrews 10:26-39.

**I. THE CALL TO HOLD ON IS A REMINDER OF HUMAN ACCOUNTABILITY BEFORE GOD. vv. 26-31**

1. *This passage is about God's corrective judgment.* What more can God do for the person who has “received the knowledge of the truth” but who has turned away? The only thing left is the temporal judgment of God.

**Insight—We must beware if our hearts are hard today!** God cannot say any more to us than what He has said through His Son. If we turn away from the Son of God, there is no hope left. He alone can get us from where we are to where we want/need to be. We must not let the pressure of our circumstances get us stuck short of our goal.

**I—In 1925, A man named Floyd Collins was exploring near Mammoth Cave in Kentucky and got stuck.** He was fifty-five feet from the surface, and he got stuck. Icy water was dripping in his face. The rescuers came in and diverted the water, and they talked with him, they calmed him down, but they could not get him out.

He began to come unglued there, stuck in that cave. He was able to see the light, able to see where he wanted to be, hearing voices, getting food, but he was stuck, and he could not get out. So he slowly began to rave about everything from chicken sandwiches to angels in white chariots.

The newspapers picked up Collins' predicament, and ten thousand people came to see him. They sold hot dogs and sandwiches. It was a side show. Seventeen days later Floyd Collins died in that hole, able to see where he wanted to be and not able to get there.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Leadership*, Vol. 12, no. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Thompson, “The Good News Is: The Bad News Is Wrong,” *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 55.

We must be careful that we do not become like the newspapers and the gawkers who watched Floyd Collins slowly die. How many people around us are hopelessly trapped in some pointless worldview manifesting itself in confusion about sexuality, about life's meaning, about what it means to be a man or a woman. We can report on this stuff as though it is a sideshow and forget that the people who are trapped in bad ideas and their worse consequences are made in the image of God. If we are anywhere near, these folks are within sight of eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rather than merely reporting on their imminent demise, we should be praying and forming strategies to help them escape from such deadly peril. For all of us, the world will press in on us, the devil will try to corner us us, the flesh is just weak enough that it will not prevent our being trapped. How can we get free? No one else can help us but Jesus Christ.

2. A willful habit of sin has no remedy.

a. The covenant based on the Law of Moses called for capital punishment for those who rejected it.

b. The New Covenant based on the blood of the Son of God should command an even greater devotion, and a greater accountability. "How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished," asks the writer, "who has trampled the Son of God under foot, ...?" (v. 29).

3. *God's judgment is certain*. It is a glorious reunion for those who belong to God through Jesus Christ. But for the person who is willfully disobedient, who turns against His Savior, who spits in the face of God Himself, here are the writer's words: "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

**Insight—We must be sober about the serious nature of human life. The stakes are very high: eternity, either with God and His love and mercy or apart from Him.**

I—Ben Kopacz of Chester, New Hampshire, sent this anecdote to *Christian Reader* some years ago: "One Sunday morning Mother decided to play a joke on my sister by phone. Dialing the number, she heard someone pick up the receiver, her cue to say in a deep voice, 'This is God speaking. Why aren't you in church?' To Mom's horror, she had dialed the wrong number."<sup>3</sup> One of these days, the Final Call is surely going to come for each of us. It will not be a practical joke, nor will it be a wrong number. Our number will be called, and we will have to answer to God, not just for our attendance at church, but for the character of our lives, the quality of our ambitions, the goal(s) toward which we spent our human lives. The big question will be, "What did you do with God's only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ?"

**II. THE CALL TO HOLD ON IS A REMINDER OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE AND SERVICE. vv. 32-34**

1. *The writer reminds his readers of their faithfulness even amid suffering*. The readers had been insulted in public. They had been persecuted. They had seen their brothers and sisters treated in a similar fashion. They had lost their property and had been thrown in prison. It appears from the drift of this passage that some of them were tempted to give up on their faith as a result of these hardships.

**Insight—We must not forget the love of God expressed to us in the past! We must remember on our own experiences of God's love in Christ, our own times of receiving God's strength in our weakness, and recognize that the race we are running is worth it all.**

**I—Pastor Thomas Tewell once reported, “When our oldest son Ryan was in the first grade, he took swimming lessons in New Providence, New Jersey.** Susan went with him to the swimming pool, and the instructor was making these 6-year-old [sic.] kids swim 12, 16, and 20 laps. Little Ryan got out of the pool after the first day of swim practice, and his lips were blue, and he had those little indentations in his hands.

“Susan felt so sorry for him she said, ‘Honey, this is so hard for you. Why don’t you quit the swim team this year and maybe you can try it again next year.’

“Ryan scratched his head and said, ‘Mom, you don’t quit something just because it’s hard.’

“And Susan scratched her head and said, ‘Who’s the parent here anyway?’”<sup>4</sup> Here is the word of God for us, too: “You don’t quit something just because it’s hard.” This life Jesus has called us to live is the only one that is anchored in the nature of God, the only life that is hooked to the train that is bound for glory. There may just be blood, sweat, tears, and toil between here and there, but, as the old song says, “It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus.”

2. *He reminds his readers of the reason for their faithfulness during persecution: “you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.”* This is a reminder that this life is not all there is. The life to come is forever, which will ultimately make even a life of hardship seem like a blip in our personal history.

**Insight—We can face a lot here when we contemplate these two facts: this life is temporary, and the next is eternal.**

**I—Here are two passages in the New Testament that can help us. First, Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:19-21 (NIV):** “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

**And the second is the witness of Paul, as he recounts all the pain he has endured for the sake of doing ministry in the name of Jesus Christ in 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 16-18 (NIV):**

<sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. <sup>8</sup> We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; <sup>9</sup> persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. <sup>10</sup> We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. <sup>11</sup> For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. <sup>12</sup> So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.”

After all of that, you might think that he was giving up. No, he was just shifting his focus to that which really lasts.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” Here’s the punch line: <sup>18</sup> *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*”

### **III. THE CALL TO HOLD ON IS A REMINDER OF CHRISTIAN HOPE. vv. 35-39**

1. *The writer calls for confident living, because the reward of God is a certain promise.* He assures the readers that their “confidence” will be “richly rewarded.”

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Tewell, “The Tenacity of a Bulldog,” *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 141.

**Insight—Are we holding to this promise today, dear friends? These present struggles are truly worth it. Our faithfulness and trust in Him will not be put to shame in the final analysis. We, too, “will be richly rewarded.”**

**I—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor of the Confessing Church who was executed by the Nazis just two weeks before the liberation of the country and the final defeat of Hitler, at the age of 39, wrote, “The only fight which is lost is that which we give up.”<sup>5</sup> It is at the finish line that the medals are hung about the neck, and only at the finish line.**

2. *He reminds his readers of the certain expectation of the Savior’s coming.* The writer, as is his custom, quotes from the Old Testament, this time the book of Habakkuk. In chapter 2:3-4, he finds these words of encouragement: “He who is coming will come and will not delay.” Surely for the Christian reader, these words give us a certain though future hope. Christ will come again to set things right, at the climax of history as He sees it.

3. *He defines true believers as those who do not “shrink back and are destroyed” as a result, but rather are “those who believe and are saved.”* In other words, those who persevere in faith are those who are truly saved.

**Insight—Which are we today: “those who shrink back” or “those who believe and are saved”?**

**I—Pastor Greg Asimakoupoulos found encouragement in the story of an author who persevered. “Acclaimed novelist James Lee Burke discovered firsthand the validating sweet fragrance of perseverance.** In the mid-’70s the creator of the Dave Robicheaux detective series wrote a book he called *The Lost Get-Back Boogie*. To his dismay his novel was rejected 111 times by New York publishers alone. (It is still considered the most thoroughly rejected manuscript in American publishing history). But Burke didn’t give up and eventually one reluctant publishing house decided to take a chance on his story. In 1985 James Lee Burke was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for *The Lost Get-Back Boogie*. Imagine the reaction of those scores of editors that originally said the manuscript was unfit.

“Another celebrated writer also knew the benefits that come when we choose not to give up or give in. St. Paul wrote “Let us not become weary in doing good, for *at the proper time* we will reap a harvest if we do not give up’ (Galatians 6:9).”<sup>6</sup>

Take it home (applications).

#### I. ARE WE RUNNING TOWARD THE FINISH LINE TODAY?

1. *We should keep on running!*
2. *Maybe we need to lighten our load in some ways.*

#### II. ARE WE KEEPING IN MIND HOW GOD HAS HELPED US ALONG THE WAY TO THIS POINT?

1. We should reflect on these things.
2. It could help to write them down.
3. It will be profitable for us and for others if we were to talk about them.

#### III. ARE WE LIVING FOR THE FINAL WORD AT THE FINISH LINE? “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christian History*, no. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Greg Asimakoupoulos. From the files of *Leadership*. My added emphasis.