

## Falling into the Hands of the Living God

### I. Announce:

- A. Slide#1 Baby Dedication 2nd: *Matt & Jessica Laster.*
  - 1. **Levi James** (3.5 yrs), **Jesse Nicholas** (2 yrs), **Aaron Matthew Laster** (7 wks).
- B. Slide#2 Baby Dedication 3rd: *Emil & Abigail Vasui. Taylor Briana Vasui.*
- C. Slide#3 Interview: Fresonke's.
  - 1. Slide#4,5 Mission Statement: Our mission at the Truth and Hope Foundation is to equip and train church leadership and laypersons in **how to biblically disciple and counsel hurting individuals** through TRUTH which leads to HOPE.
  - 2. Cheriefresonke.com [Books: *Clothed in Rt. Go in Peace*]
- D. Slide#6blank Prayer: Haiti Team (HEF/CMCS H.S.) Peru Team (Tony).

### II. Slide#7 Intro: Title: *Falling into the Hands of the Living God*

- A. God **warns** us so that we will not be presumptuous, **but** He **comforts** us so that we will not be discouraged.
  - 1. The **hard heart** needs the **warning**; the **broken heart** needs the **comfort**. (www)
- B. Outline: God's Pensive Forewarning. God's Past Faithfulness. God's Permanent Faithfulness.
- C. Is it ever right for God to raise His voice, yell, scream, & flail His arms at us? **Absolutely!**
  - 1. Just as a parent would, when seeing their toddler dart out into the street, where traffic is coming full speed. Pitch, tone, seriousness, **everything changes**...when it's **this** serious. The small child **MUST** be warned to stay out of the deadly street.
  - 2. Hear **the warning** as the writer in Hebrews continues.

### III. Slide#8 **GOD'S PENSIVE FOREWARNING (26-31)** [*pensive* - deep/serious]

- A. (26) This verse is the 2nd most controversial verse in all of Hebrews.
- B. The answer lies in the word **willfully** – It means, *willingly, voluntarily, deliberately, intentionally*.<sup>1</sup>
  - 1. "It is directed to those who **deliberately keep on sinning**(NIV; ESV, NLT) **after** they fully understand the way of escape in Jesus." Ray Stedman
    - a) So 2 things: it's **deliberate & continual**.
    - b) Obviously then, one can't *stumble into* this sin *suddenly*.
    - c) "It is **choosing to live for self** behind a Christian veneer." Ray Stedman, pg11.
  - 2. They had **known** the way of life...**but had** not chosen to **avail themselves** of it.

3. Slide#9 So, of course they are not going to find *another way*, nor *another sacrifice*.
- C. (28) Deut.17:1-6 is spoken of here - If one **who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them**, was taken to the gate of the city & stoned to death.
1. *No mercy, no appeal, certain death*. How much worse under the **new cov.** (vs.29)
- D. (29) **Trampled the Son of God under foot** – This is similar what Jesus was getting to when he said, *Do not...cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet*. (or show disdain/grind him into the dirt). *3 definitions of sin...*
1. Slide#10a **Sin = trampling Christ underfoot** - The **awfulness of sin** lay **not** in its **breaking of the law** but in its trampling of **the love** of Christ under foot.<sup>2</sup>
    - a) *It is not mere rebelliousness against the law; it is the wounding of love.*
  2. Slide#10b **Sin = the failure to see the sacredness of sacred things** - the writer says, look at he **shed blood** & the **broken body** of Christ. **Look at what your new relationship to God cost? Can you treat it like it doesn't matter?**
    - a) *Sin is the failure to realize the sacredness of that sacrifice upon the cross.*
  3. Slide#10c **Sin = the insult to the Holy Spirit** - The H.S. **tell us** what is rt & wrong. **Checks us** when we're on our way to sin. And **stirs us** when were drifting into lethargy.
    - a) *To disregard this voice is to...insult the Spirit & grieve the heart of God.*
- E. (31) Sometimes we as Christians are accused of using language too harsh, too alarming, too severe. Yet I believe there are no words in our English language by which we could actually **exaggerate** the **awful condition** of **a soul**, which has **refused** the **gospel** & **awaits judgment**.
1. Slide#11a This of course reminds us of the **most famous sermon preached during the Great Awakening**, & likely the most famous sermon in all American history, **Jonathon Edwards**, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, delivered in **Enfield, Conn.** in 1741
  2. Slide#11b He used **startling imagery** I quote: “all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you, & keep you out of hell, than a spider’s web would have to stop a falling rock.” - “you hang by a slender thread, w/the flames of divine wrath flashing about it & ready every moment to singe it, & burn it asunder.” – “the bow of God’s wrath is bent, & the arrow made ready on the string; & justice directs the bow to your heart, & strains at the bow: & it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, & that of an angry God, w/o any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk w/your blood.”
    - a) Slide#12 The stakes are just as high today...**heaven or hell?**
    - b) As Kent Hughes said, “Jonathon Edwards gave his people a whiff of the **sulphurs of hell** that they might deeply inhale the **fragrances of grace**.”
  3. Oh, so isn't when it says, **Jesus is trampled underfoot by man must be, God in the hands of angry sinners?**

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from William Barclay, Hebrews, pg. 125.

- F. So this verse is a **warning** to the **unbelievers**: Let's look at the passage that might have been on the writers mind that helped form the words he choose...**but** instead relates to the **believer**.
1. Slide#13 2 Sam.24:14 And David said to Gad, I am in great distress. **Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD**, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.
  2. This is **the golden hope** of the believer, to **fall repentantly** into the hands of God. **His hands are our hope**.
  3. [poem] The hands of Christ are very **frail**, For they were broken w/a **nail**.  
But only those reach heaven at **last**, Whom those frail, broken hands hold **fast**. K.Hughes

#### IV. Slide#14 **GOD'S PAST FAITHFULNESS (32-34)**

- A. After the **warning** comes the **comfort**.
- B. (32) Recall the former days - It was a challenge for them to **remember** how they had **stood strong** 15 years earlier during the persecution under the *Roman Emperor Claudius* (ad 49).
- C. (32b) A great **struggle** with sufferings – [*struggle* = athlesism, our word athletic]
1. The persecution was like a **hard-fought** athletic contest.
  2. Slide#15,16 Here's a great example of this: **Hugh Latimer** (the English reformer) on one occasion preached before **King Henry the VIII**, & offended Henry in his boldness. Latimer was commanded to preach the following weekend & make an apology. On the following Sunday, after reading the text, he **addressed himself** as he began to preach: "*Hugh Latimer, dost thou know before whom thou art this day to speak? To the high & mighty monarch, the king's most excellent majesty, who can take away thy life if thou offendest; therefore, take heed that thou speakest not a word that may displease; but then consider well, Hugh, dost thou not know from whence thou comest; upon whose message thou art sent? Even by the great & mighty God! who is all-present, & who beholdeth all thy ways, & who is able to cast thy soul into hell! Therefore, take care that thou deliverest thy message faithfully.*" He then gave **Henry** the **same sermon** he had preached the week before...**only w/more energy!**
- D. Slide#17 (33a) You were made a **spectacle** - they were made **public theatre** [*spectacle*=theatrizo/theater]
- E. (33b,34a) You became companions of those who were so treated - (NIV) **You stood side by side with those who were so treated**.
1. **If you insult them you insult me**. It's locking arms...facing this together.
- F. You had **compassion on me in my chains** – In the 1st century prisoners had no means of survival apart from the **visits of friends** who brought food & water & clothing.
1. Still this way in **hospitals, jails & prisons** in most all developing countries.
  2. **Also**, in the days of persecution that would **place the visiting friends in grave danger** because of associating w/the Christian.
- G. How can we come alongside our brothers & sisters imprisoned or being persecuted today?...  
*Intercessory prayer for them*: Like highlighted in our **Persecuted Church** Keynote b4 service.

1. **Slide#18** Following the **secession** of South Sudan in July 2011, Sudanese Christians have experienced **escalating attacks** resulting from a government policy to **eradicate Christianity** from the country. **Since 2012, Sudan has expelled foreign Christians and bulldozed many church buildings on the pretext that church property belongs to investors.** The most recent attack at the end of November included a wrecking crew (accompanied by police carrying weapons) to bulldoze the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church's, ***Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church***, along with some houses, including one belonging to ***Nile Theological College***.
  2. Police **beat** worshippers and **arrested 38** for refusing to surrender the property, but the Christians resisted the attacks. **"Boisterous young men" willing to die for their faith faced off with police, and church members formed a human shield to ward off additional demolition attempts.** One of the arrested believers announced: **"We have enjoyed worshipping and praising God in prison. The power of God was present among us."**
- H. (34b) **Joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods** - They could actually feel **joy** over watching their property confiscated, **since** they took comfort in the fact that their **true treasures** were in **heaven, not on earth.**

## V. **Slide#19 GOD'S PERMANENT FAITHFULNESS (35-39)**

- A. (35) **Confidence** - Remember vs.19 **boldness/confidence** (same word here). **It's *God confidence*.**
- B. (36) **Endurance** **does not** earn salvation, **but rather** it is the ***principle evidence*** of saving grace
  1. **Slide#20a** Again quoting ***Bishop Hugh Latimer, A drop of rain made a hole in a stone, not by violence but by continually falling. So we need patience & perseverance.***
- C. **Slide#20b (37) Patience** - And so we await His 2nd coming.
- D. (38) **Continuance** - This is quoted from Habakkuk 2:4 as an encouragement to Habakkuk to ***live by faith***. Later he arose from his depression & was able to sing, **Though the **fig tree** may not blossom, Nor **fruit** be on the vines; Though the labor of the **olive** may fail, And the **fields** yield no food; Though the **flock** may be cut off from the fold, And there be **no herd** in the stalls; Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.** Hab.3:17,18
  1. WilliamJay This is a **faith** that is tired of being tossed back & forth idly moored at its dock This is a **faith** that isn't afraid to leave the calm harbor. **A faith** that unfurls its sails & sets out to sea. **A faith** that isn't afraid of encountering a healthy breeze. **Sail away. Spread your sail toward the storm & trust in Him who rules the raging seas.**<sup>3</sup>
    - a) "When I cannot **feel** the ***faith of assurance***, I live by the **fact** of ***God's faithfulness***." Mt Henry
- E. (39) **Perseverance** - This verse helps us out with vs.26.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Morning Exercises, March 10; by Rev. William Jay

1. The **2 groups** addressed throughout the letter are here placed in **direct contrast**:  
**Some** are *drawing/shrinking back* & are *headed for destruction*.  
**Others** continue to believe & thus experience *the saving of their souls*.
- F. **Slide#21 The just shall live by faith** introduces us to our last section of Hebrews.
1. **Faith** is the way we **begin** the life in Christ; **Faith** is also the way it is **maintained**; & **Faith** is what will bring us **at last** in triumph through the gates of glory.
- G. *Endurance, patience, continuance* & *perseverance* are a **daily struggle** for the Christian.
1. But often its **ease** that will ruin us & **the struggles** that actually toughened us.
  2. **Slide#22 Hannibal of Carthage** (247-183bc) generally considered one of the greatest military commanders in history was the general who had routed the Roman legions. **But winter came** and the campaign had to be suspended. Hannibal wintered his troops in **Capua** (N.of Naples) which he had captured, a city of **luxury**. And 1 winter in **Capua** did what the Roman Legions had not succeeded in doing. The **luxury** so sapped the morale of the *Carthaginian troops* that when the spring came & the campaign was resumed they were unable to stand before the Romans.
    - a) **Slide#23 Ease** had *ruined* them when **struggle** had only *toughened* them.
- H. This morning, through faith, *fall into the hands & arms of the living & loving God...so you don't fall into the hands of the just & judging God.*
- I. **Communion:**
1. Bread -
  2. Cup -