

“Being a Witness”

Fixing Our Eyes Upon Jesus, Our High Priest

Hebrews 12:1-2

Dr. Jeff Stivason

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Jeff: Our gracious heavenly Father, we thank You for this day, for the time You’ve given, for Your love shed abroad in our hearts, for the Holy Spirit who guides us, leads us, comforts us, convicts us, and brings us into conformity with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Father, we thank You so much for Your kindness, for Your gentleness, for Your care over our lives, which started when we were undeserving sinners. And yet You loved us by sending Your only-Begotten into the world. Father, we’re thankful that we can gather here this morning and open Your word and study it together. We realize that there are many benefits to that. We realize that we live in a country that has at least borrowed from the capital of a good beginning. And Father, as we come here, we pray that what we learn would not only edify our own thinking and our own lives, but we pray, Father, that You will make us a leaven in this world, wherever we are in the world. And we pray that we would carry the gospel into the world with us.

Father, we ask that You would bring many to Yourself, not just through us but through others, through many others who carry that same gospel.

Father, as we think today about some of the concerns of our hearts we think about Mike Kulmoski. We think about his placement in residency. We ask that You would smile upon Him in Your providence. We pray, Father, that You would give Him a good place and a good beginning in this work.

Father, we’re thankful for the men who are with us who’ve had difficulties. We’re thankful for their time here. We’re thankful for every person here and ask, Father, that You would meet us this morning in Your word, for we know that it is Your word. And we know that You take it up by Your Spirit applying it to our hearts. And Father, we pray that You would do that for our good and for Your glory. And we pray it in Jesus’ name. amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. So this morning I want us to look at just a couple of verses. And the couple of verses are brief but very dense—Hebrews 12, verses 1 and 2. Let me read these for you.

You know, I want to remind you before I do that this is the word of God, that it is His word because His Spirit inspired it. He had His human authors write exactly the words He wanted them to write. It was a necessary word because of Adam’s fall, and so it’s supernatural and special. It is also sufficient for man’s need in his fallen condition. It is clear. And it’s authoritative because it is His word. Those are the attributes of Scripture, and we ought to remember those every time we come to God’s word. It’s His word that we’re reading.

Hebrews 12. *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely. And let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of*

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our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: That is two weeks in a row.

Sig: Whew! (*Applause*)

Jeff: I can’t believe it. I can’t believe I remembered it. (*Laughter*) I looked over at Don and remembered it. (*Laughter*) Anyway, I’m kind of putting too much into it, aren’t I? (*Laughter*)

Ted: It’s a godly habit.

Jeff: All right. So I want to talk to you about a few things this morning related to this verse. I want to talk to you about some introductory matters. I want us to think about *the great company* that we’re going to encounter in this particular verse. Sig, sorry about that. Sig told me that I can come to the microphone every once in a while. But not always, just a few times. Then I want to look at *becoming a part of this great company*. And then I want to look at *the Leader of the company*, the Leader of the pack. (*Laughter*) So those are the things that I want us to do. You like that? Thanks, Don; I appreciate that very much. (*Laughter*)

So I want to look at those things. Let’s start with the introductory matters. I want us to think first of all about this word *approval*. We’ve seen it before. We’ve had the opportunity to investigate it. You know that it means *to prove*. It means *to give evidence*. That’s the idea.

And you know this word. You are looking for this word, when you see something like “The frog sought a hand in marriage.” Remember that? No? Okay. So forget that. (*Laughter*) *The Wind and the Willows*? Anyway, you’re seeking approval when you go a-courtin’, right? When you go a-courtin’ and you come to your beloved’s father, and you ask for her hand in marriage, you’re looking for his approval, right? You’re looking for his blessing. And I think that’s what we think of when we think about this whole idea of approval.

And it’s a two-way street, isn’t it? We’re looking to give evidence to this father that we are worthy of his approval, and we’re looking for his approval. In other words, we’re looking for him to smile upon us and say, “You have my approval.” In other words, “I’ve recognized things in you that I want to give my approval for so that you can marry my daughter.”

But more than that, *approval is desirable*. It’s desirable, isn’t it? And we want people’s approval. I mean, students want the approval of their teachers, employees want the approval of their bosses, husbands want the approval of their wives. You know, you want that respect, and so forth and so on. So approval is a desirable thing.

Now I know what you’re thinking. Why is all this relevant? And the answer is Hebrews 11:2 and Hebrews 11:39.

Transcriber’s Note: Hebrews 11:1-2, ESV. “*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation.*”

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Verse 39. “*And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised.*”

Jeff: If you remember, right, I told you that Hebrews 11 is really book-cased. It’s called an *inclusio*. It’s wrapped in two verses. And really it’s roped off by this word at the beginning and at the end. For it is by it, that is faith, that men gained approval. That is at the beginning of the chapter. And then at the end of the chapter, in verse 39, “*And all these, having gained approval through their faith.*”

Transcriber’s Note: NASB.

Jeff: And so what we really find is that we find that this particular section is bookended by this idea of approval.

Now that’s a little misleading in the English, because when we look at it in the Greek one of the things that we realize is that it’s the word *martyr*, or that it’s from the word *martyr*. And when we think of the word *martyr*, we don’t think of approval. When we think of the word *martyr*, we think of the word for a witness of the faith who has been put to death. I mean, that’s what we think of when we think of martyrs. It’s become in some sense a technical word for those who have died for their faith.

And originally it fit that sort of thing. I mean, think about it. When you think about a martyr, you think about a witness, which is what it could well mean. You think about somebody who is affirmed, and that goes back to the approval. And so you have this sort of sphere of meaning in all of these ideas coming together in that sphere. Or to speak well of. A martyr is somebody that’s spoken well of. Obviously, if he is martyred for his faith, you speak well of him;--maybe not the people who put him to death, but certainly the group of which he was a part. So he’s a martyr. He has lost his life for the faith. He has been somebody that is approved.

Now why is this important? Well, it’s important because of *the great company that we’re going to encounter*. And that’s what I want us to focus on for the next couple of minutes.

When you think about this,—and I’m going to tie this in in just a minute,--when you think of this particular passage, you oftentimes think of *the race*, right? As soon as I read it, you knew already what I had in mind, that great race. And you have this idea of many spectators, this great cloud of witnesses, and that’s what you think of.

But I want you to think about what I just said. You have the “*great cloud of witnesses*”, the great cloud of martyrs. There’s our word. So the word that enclosed Hebrews chapter 11, “*those who had gained approval*”, or the idea of martyrdom there,--*good witness, affirmation, approval, evidence*,--that whole idea. Now we have here a *cloud of witnesses*, a cloud of martyrs.

Now let me put it like this. This is a crowd of people who had gained the approval of God. In other words, going back to Hebrews chapter 11, this “*great cloud of witnesses*” is the group who had gained approval of God through their faith. He had spoken well of them. That’s the idea.

Now what else can we say about this particular passage when we think about this particular group that has been spoken well of? What else? Well, this is where I really want to talk this morning in this first point. This is a group that was spoken well of by the

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Lord. But this is also a group that had their faith confirmed, or the truth of faith confirmed by their own experience.

Now I want us to just stop and think about that for just a minute. What does that mean when your own experience is able to confirm the truth of something? What do you think that means? First of all, have you ever had that experience?

You know, I can think of some times when we may have had that experience where we fall in love, and we think that this woman who is the object of our love, well, she must be my true love because of the experience that I'm having at the moment. And so my experience confirms the fact that the object of my love is worthy of my love.

Now the problem with that is what? The problem with that is that sometimes the subjectivity of an experience confirms the wrong thing. That's the problem. But the thing that we need to think about when we think about the object here, or the objectivity of God's love here, is that when my experience confirms what I know about God's love for me,--or let me put it this way. When my experience confirms my faith in God, I know that is not a subjective love that is wrong, but is certainly right.

And so if there is any subjective experiential love for God, it is not like the subjective love that I might have for another person. That could be wrong. But my experience for God confirms the truth of my love for Him. Does that make sense, or do you want to flesh that out a little bit?

Sig: (*bantering*): Here's your own microphone to speak with, okay? (*Laughter*)

Ted: It's just that the experience confirms the truth for the Christian. And for the person who is not a Christian, the truth confirms the experience. It's kind of almost reversed, because he finds truth in the experience.

Jeff: The unbeliever finds truth in the experience.

Ted: And that becomes the truth.

Jeff: So give me an example of what you're thinking.

Ted: Well I mean, you would say, "I'm in love. Therefore I'm having the experience. Therefore it must be true."

Jeff: Right, that's right.

Don: The burning in the bosom.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: I mean, this is a critical distinction.

Jeff: But for us, the truth of the matter elicits a love from us. That's right.

Ted: That's right. And every Christian would have to admit that experience. I can't imagine being a Christian and not having that experience.

Jeff: To a greater or lesser degree, right?

Ted: Yes, of course.

Jeff: Yes, mm-hmm. This might be confusing the matter. But C.S. Lewis wrote a book called *The Four Loves*. And in that book he talks about love from different vantage points. And he talks about there being basically three types of love when you think about the loves.

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He says that there is a *need love*. And a need love is that love that a baby has when it cries out for milk. It needs that love from its mother. And the mother can give *gift love*. She can give her milk to the baby, right? She can freely give that.

The thing about it, Lewis says, is that there is a reciprocity to that. In other words, the baby may need the milk in order to survive. But the mother also needs to offload that milk or she becomes very uncomfortable. So there’s always a reciprocity between need and gift love.

But he goes on to talk about a third aspect, which is *appreciative love*, which is the kind of love that you say to yourself is like a fine piece of art. I may not be able to possess that piece of art because it’s too expensive for me. But it should exist. And people ought to appreciate it, right?

So Lewis talks about this in these kinds of terms. I fall in love with a woman. I need her. I can gift her. I can give to her what I have. And yet if I can’t have her, then somebody ought to be able to do these things for her, right?

And you can further work with those categories in terms of possessiveness and obsessiveness. Possessive love and obsessive love are distortions of appreciative love. Possessive love says, “If I can’t have her, no one can,” right? That’s not appreciative love. Appreciative love says, “If I can’t have her, someone ought to, who treats her well,” right? Obsessive love puts her in the place of God, right?

So all of these kinds of loves are there for our thinking. But it’s the appreciative love that we have for God, where we see that appreciative love really translates into worship, because when God gives us love, such that we appreciate Him and say, “He is worthy of glory whether or not it is I who glorify Him,” that’s appreciative love. And that’s the kind of objective Person God is, who draws that kind of love from us, right? So there’s a sense in which this is the purest love of all that draws from me the right kind of experience.

I mean, a person may or may not do that, right? But God will always draw from me the right emotional response. Does that make sense?

Brave Man: Yes.

Jeff: Yes, Don?

Don: Jeff, on another matter, (and I may be getting ahead), it says that “*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,*”

Transcriber’s Note: NKJV.

Don: There are people who extrapolate from that that our loved ones who are in heaven are watching us now. What is your take on that?

Jeff: Yes. I don’t think it’s talking about that. I think that the “*great cloud of witnesses*” is those who are mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11. So we just went through a whole list of Old Testament saints who were approved for their faith. And now he’s basically saying to us, “You’re surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses who were approved. So run to gain the same kind of approval.”

Don: In what sense are we surrounded?

Jeff: Well, I think there’s a sense in which he’s saying that you’re a part of this group. You’re a part of this community. I don’t think that he’s saying that there are spectators in the stands of heaven who are looking down upon us. That’s not the way I read this.

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Don: The communion of saints, in other words.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. Now why is it that I’m making such a big deal out of this? It’s because he’s been applying this letter to us in this way, really, ever since the beginning. What do I mean? Well, in 3:13 he warned against those who have an unbelieving heart.

Transcriber’s Note: Hebrews 3:12-13,ESV. *“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day.”*

Jeff: What is he saying when he says that? He’s saying that your unbelieving heart is not responding rightly to the objective love of God. In other words, if you’re not believing, it’s not the love that God has for you that is wrong. It is your response. In other words, your experience at that point is wrong.

Now we are living in a world that doesn’t want to hear that their experience is wrong. We’re living in a world that says, “This is my experience. I want you to validate it.” I mean, this is where we are with the whole homosexual community. It is. “This is my experience. If you don’t validate it, I’m going to crush you.”

And we’re saying, “Well look, your experience is not valid, at least not using Biblical categories.” In fact, for instance, we would want to say something like this. We would want to say, “Look, there’s really no such thing, biologically, as a homosexual.” That’s why the Bible confines itself to talking about homosexuality in terms of behaviors, because it’s a behavior that’s sinful.

And so they want to say, “Look, you’ve got to confirm my experience.”

And we’ve got to say, “No. We want to love you, but we can’t confirm your experience.” That experience is not a godly experience drawn by the objective love of God for us, it’s not. And so he warns against an unbelieving heart.

He warns against forsaking the assembly. If your experience is that “I can forsake the assembling together”, and in this case go back to Judaism, or in our case just forsake the assembly for whatever reason. For instance, some of us will forsake the assembly and we’ll say it like this. We’ll say, “You know what? I can get closer to God further away from people,” right? “I can be closer to God in the woods than I can being with all those hypocrites.”

You know what? Do you know what the difference between that is? If you’re in the woods, you’re in a righteous assembly, because those trees are groaning under *your* sin. *(Laughter)* That’s the difference, right?

Sig: You said “groaning,” not “growing.”

Jeff: Groaning. Romans 8, you know? *(Laughter)* Romans 8: the creation groans under Adam’s futility, right? So the point is that your experience at that point is wrong! You’re not having a right experience at that point. And you need to understand that.

And again the problem is that with all that is within us, we believe that our experience is right, that somehow we’re better than those hypocrites that gather at the church, or that somehow or other I get closer to God apart from His body. And see, all of those things are wrong experiences. That’s what he’s been saying.

And then there’s this. And I want you to know this. Bill? Where’s Bill? Bill, Bill! *(Laughter)* You have to know, Bill! That wasn’t me. *(Laughter)* I’m waiting.

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Bill McCoy: It was Sig. Sig saw me come in this morning He knew I wasn't awake.

Jeff: Okay. That's the kind of guy you are. You were down.

Bill: Yeah.

Jeff: I understand.

Bill: You need to get it to understand the impact.

Jeff: I understand. *(Laughter)* All right. What I want you to know is this. Here's the problem. The problem is that we're going to ask ourselves this. And we're going to deal with this later. We're not going to deal with it right now because I want to stay with this point. The question that we're going to ask ourselves is this. Are you saying to me then that I need to earn God's approval? Because I thought you'd been telling me all along when we studied the book of Hebrews that I don't have to earn God's approval, that Christ has earned that approval for me. Am I doing well, Bill? Huh? Yes? Okay. In Hebrews 11 what we need to understand, at least at this point, is that these people are becoming what they are. In other words, their experience is out of accord with who they are in Christ. But the more faith they exercise, the more their experience is being brought into accord with who they are.

I'm just going to pause and say it right now. Think about a baby at this point. I've given you this illustration before. But I actually think that this illustration is one of the most helpful illustrations that I've ever come up with. I really do. If you find a problem with it, don't tell me. *(Laughter)*

The baby, the zygote, the smallest that the baby is, still possesses 46 chromosomes—23 from Mom, 23 from Dad, and will never get any more genetic information than that. And that's why we say that that zygote is as human as it will ever be. And yet, as the zygote grows, it becomes what it already is according to that genetic expression.

And in my understanding that's what the Christian life is. In other words, the day you were born again in Jesus Christ you were as Christian as you would ever be. And yet, every day after that, you were becoming what you already are in Christ. In other words, how that pays off for us right now is this. In other words, our experience is being brought into conformity with who we are in Christ. So our experience oftentimes has to catch up with who we are. And sometimes that looks like this. Our experience has to catch up with what we know.

Don: Like what?

Jeff: Well, I can give you a case. The example that is burned into my thinking on this particular point is a counseling session I had years and years ago, where the gal was in an affair. And she was sitting there with me and her husband. And I said to her, “Call this guy and tell him it's over.”

And she said, “I can't.”

And I said, “Why?”

And she said, “I love him.”

And I said, “Let me ask you a question.” And I picked up the Bible and I went through the Bible. And I just read all of these passages that we all know, right, about faithfulness and about marriage. And I said, “Do you believe that?” And she affirmed her belief in all of it.

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And I said, “Call him up and tell him it’s over.”

She said, “I can’t.”

And I said, “Why not?”

And she said, “Because I love him.”

And I said, “That’s just my crucial point. Your experience is wrong. Your love at this point is wrong. It’s not matching with what the Lord says is wrong,” right? And that, in my mind, has burned into me that when I talk about us being sort of a unitary dispositional complex of mind, emotions and will, that’s what I’m thinking. When we’re functioning at our best, we think one thing, want one thing, and will one thing. That’s us functioning at our best. When we’re fragmented, we know one thing, we want another thing, and it’s anybody’s guess what we’ll will, right? That’s the idea.

But in the gospel our experience, our whole self, is being brought into conformity with a unitary dispositional complex. In other words, we’re being taught in the gospel to think, to want and to will one thing. Does that make sense, Don?

Don: Yes.

Jeff: Okay, okay. Well, you’re the one that asked it. *(Laughter)*

Don: You said, “like this.” For the sake of the transcript I just wanted to know what you meant by “like this.”

Jeff: Oh, okay. All right, yes. Yes?

Brave Man: I was just going to try to say what you’re saying in a different way. And maybe what you were trying to do was to get at this before. Our culture determines the Bible through their experiences. So somebody who says, “I have homosexual feelings” then looks at the Bible and says, “I only see that Jesus talks about loving people. So that means my grace is validated.”

Jeff: Yes.

Brave Man: So we’re looking at the Bible through the lens of our experiences. What we ought to be doing is the reverse, looking at our experiences through the lens of the Bible.

Jeff: Yes.

Brave Man: And so then we say, “If I have these homosexual feelings, I look at the Scripture and say, ‘That’s an abomination,’” I need to be praying, “Lord, deliver me from it.” It’s scary how much the “evangelical Christian community” is really beginning to interpret the Bible through these experiences. We’re getting away from Scriptural exegesis.

Jeff: Yes, that’s very true. Okay. So not only is this a confirming experience, or it ought to be a confirming experience. This ought to be a motivating experience. In other words, this ought to be motivating approval. This approval of God that we experience subjectively ought to be motivating for us. In other words, think about it. God spoke well of these people. And we ought to long for God to speak well of us. We ought to long for that experience.

And I think, for instance, that when you think about Hebrews chapter 10, remember what he said in Hebrews chapter 10 right before this whole talk about this great cloud of witnesses which has God’s approval? To them he says, “Don’t shrink back.” He’s

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quoting. He’s quoting from the Old Testament. Verse 38. “*Yet a little while and the coming One will come and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith. And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.*” And then he goes on to Hebrews chapter 11, and he says that these have the approval of God. These God has spoken well of.

And then he gets to chapter 12 and he says, “Now you’re surrounded by this group that God has spoken well of. You ought to desire that same thing and not shrink back.” That’s the motivating subjectivity of it that we ought to take on board.

Well, then he’s going to talk about *being part of the community*. But do you kind of get that? Does that make sense to you, what we’ve been talking about? I don’t see a lot of head shakes, but I don’t see a lot of questions, either. So we’ll just go on. I’ll just pretend that it’s perfectly mud. *(Laughter)*

Ted: And this is excellent. But Jeff, I am still left with the feeling that I’m going to gain my approval.

Jeff: Yes, I know you are.

Ted: I’m not biting you. I just want to know.

Jeff: I understand.

Ted: I still have that feeling that you’re leading me to think, *Okay, how did they get God’s approval? They didn’t shrink back? Now how much shrinking back do I do before I lose God’s approval? How much not shrinking back must I do before I get God’s approval?* It all becomes and almost begins to sound like a quantitative thing.

Jeff: Yes, yes. What I’m trying to do, Ted, is that I’m trying to take us up to the mark and make everybody feel as guilty as I can before I—*(Laughter)* When they go to work, they’ll be left with that guilt, that motivating guilt. *(Laughter)* And don’t tell anyone! *(Laughter)*

Ted: You had me interested. Now—*(laughter)*

Matt: So *martyr* and *witness* and *approval* are all—

Jeff: It’s all the same word he’s using.

Matt: So we’re not so much proving our love for God by suffering on his behalf. We’re not trying to do that.

Jeff: That’s right.

Matt: We’re proving the love of God in us.

Jeff: That’s right.

Matt: And so it’s that subjective/objective thing. We’re testifying not to “Hey, God, look how great I am!”

Jeff: That’s right.

We’re not great, and He knows the state of our souls. We’re testifying to the world out there this is a God worth suffering and dying for.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. And listen. You know, this will be controversial. So I’m not going to say it. Never mind. *(Laughter)*

Don: Ah, come on!

Brave Men: Boo!

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Jeff: No, it comes right out of your comment. So for instance, this is the major difference between those who embrace believer baptism and those who embrace infant baptism. Those who embrace believer baptism are saying that their baptism points to their faith. And I think it was the Southern Baptist Convention which says as much. And I can't remember which year they said that. They said it very explicitly in the document. But it's there.

But the pedo-baptist or the infant-baptist is not saying, “Look at the faith of this person.” What the pedo-baptist is saying is, “Look at the Christ who promises.”

And there's a huge difference between the two. And here's the payoff as to how huge this difference is. We are told, at least in our Westminster Confession, that we are to improve upon our baptism when we see a baptism. What does that mean? It means to make good use of it.

How do I make good use of it? For instance, if I'm in a state where my faith is weak, how do I make use of my baptism if my baptism pointed to my faith? But if I'm in a state of weak faith, and I make use of my baptism by clinging to the promise of Christ that was highlighted in my baptism, well then I can go a long way, because it's not my faith that I'm drawing down on. It's Christ that I'm drawing down on in order to strengthen my faith.

Ted: Sock it to 'em, sock it to 'em! *(Laughter)*

Jeff: You know, it's this difference. And I've given you this illustration before, too. But it's really worth it. Think about it. It comes right out of what I just said. One theologian wrote another theologian and said, “I'm dying and I'm weak in my faith right now. I'm afraid.”

And another theologian wrote to him and said this. He said, “Bob, if you were taking a walk in the woods and you came across a bridge,” he said, “Would you ask yourself, ‘Do I have enough faith in bridges to cross that bridge?’ Or would you go to that bridge and examine its beams, its bolts, its construction, and say, ‘That bridge is worthy of my trust’, and then cross over it?”

And then he said, “Bob, you need to focus on Christ rather than ask yourself introspective questions about what you feel.” And to me that has been—brothers, that alone, which is a true life story, makes me want to sing, because that is so freeing to me. When I am weak in my faith, the thing to do is not to say to myself, “Well, I thought I had faith!”, and “Why is my faith so weak, and how am I going to bolster this?” No, I go to the bridge and I look at Christ. I examine His promises. I see Him in the types and I watch Him fulfill those things. And I look at Christ and all of a sudden I'm filled, because whether my faith is weak or strong, it lays hold of the same Christ in His promises.

It's an enormous difference. But that again goes back to what we've been saying. My experience always has to conform to the truth. And that's another way of my experience conforming to the truth, rather than my experience being the shaping aspect of my thinking. Yes?

Brian: So I agree with everything—

Jeff: Let him have the microphone, yes. *(Laughter)*

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Brian: Matthew 24:13. *“But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”* So we have the Scripture which says things like this.

Jeff: Yes.

Brian: And in looking at your zygote analogy, if you’re truly called, elect, you are a zygote, you’re a Christian believer.

Jeff: Yes.

Brian: And no matter how much sin maims you and disfigures you, you are still a human, even though you might not look like one whatsoever. You’re still a human if you were truly a zygote from the beginning, to use that analogy. But then you read things like that, and it calls me to say, all right. I believe Christ, all the work, trust Him completely. Got it. I know that if I’m truly elect, truly a zygote, I’ll be there to the end. But am I even a zygote, right? So my sense is from that, because you can’t trust your experiences. You know, everybody’s experience is a little bit different. So is it truly that I can have comfort or faith that I am truly a zygote if I have a want to desire to be one, because if I don’t have that want and desire to be one, then I’m like the unsaved who want to run away from it?

Jeff: Well, I think that’s one piece of confirming evidence that does warrant my assurance, right? So when we think about assurance, this assurance is the same kind of thing. There are objective promises about salvation that I need to subjectively apply to myself, right?

For instance, the promise is that *“God so loved the world that He sent His only-Begotten Son”* into the world to save men. That is as objective as you can get. God saves sinful men. But it doesn’t say that God so loved His Son that He sent Him into the world to save Jeff.

Brian: Right.

Jeff: I have to apply that promise to myself, and there’s the subjectivity. And here’s the thing. If I look to that promise and it elicits an experience from me that’s consistent with the Scriptural account of what a believer’s experience is, then that is one reason that I have reason to hope that my experience is being shaped by the truth that is in me. Go ahead.

Brian: I guess that doesn’t help me, because you went and just took it right back to experience. It’s my experience, it’s my understanding, it’s the promise. I have to trust in the promise. So I get that completely. The promise is there. You have to apply that to your life.

Jeff: See, but that’s what faith is. This is what faith is, right? Faith is that I have to know something—the object of promise,—I have to assent to what I know,—and here’s what saving faith constitutes, because even the demons can have the first two,—I need to want what I know and assent to. And that’s subjective.

Brian: So then that goes back to as long as you want and desire it, and truthfully, right? It’s not that I want and desire these things because I don’t want to go to hell, though that’s a want and desire that’s been placed upon my heart. Not wanting to go to hell is part of it, but also—

Jeff: And it could be the very beginning of it, right?

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Brian: Yes.

Jeff: I mean, the very beginning. I’ll never forget this. We used to do street evangelism on Fridays when I was in another place. And it was really an interesting time because it used to be a cruise night. This is just a little extra. It used to be a cruise night, and it was just great. The whole city was just alive with this cruise strip, and we’d just go down to this cruise strip. Well then the police put an end to the cruise strip so that everybody just started gathering in parking lots. So we would just go into the parking lots. We thought that was all the better, right?

We were on the edge of this parking lot one day. And I really thought we were going to end up getting whopped on. I really did. In fact, one guy started saying, “These guys are drunk.” And I’m thinking, *Yes! They think we’re like Peter! (Laughter)* This is great! I digress on that.

Anyway, there was this girl that we were talking to on that very night with her boyfriend. Her boyfriend was really upset with us. But she was pregnant by him. And she was a Wiccan. And we were talking to her and this is what I said to her. I said, “Listen to me. Put all your objections at bay for just a minute. Just do me a favor and presuppose something. Just do me a favor and presuppose that the Scriptures are what I’m claiming them to be. Can you do that?”

She said, “I’ll try.”

I said, “Okay.” So I started to walk her through the gospel. I just started to say to her, “Okay. This is what the Scriptures say about your condition, everyone’s condition. This is what the Scriptures say. This is how God deals with that condition. This is what happens to people if they don’t accept His dealings with them.” That sort of thing, right?

And at the end she looked at me dumbfounded and she said to me, “I don’t want to go to hell.”

And I thought, *Just a few seconds ago you didn’t believe there was a hell, right? (Laughter)* And so what I’m saying is that may have just been elicited out of fear of hearing about hell, when for a moment she suspended her own beliefs. And at that moment I don’t think it had anything saving about it. There was no saving quality about it, at least from my perspective. But maybe from the Holy Spirit it was a different perspective.

But what I’m saying is that someone can have that fear of going to hell, and it be real and valid. And that would be the only thing they have at that moment that they have that will then grow to something else, right?

Ted: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Isn’t that the place to start?

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Bishop Rodgers: Jesus said, “*Do not fear him who is able to destroy the body. But fear Him who can destroy both the body and the soul in hell.*” If Jesus was willing to threaten people, then why are we so pussy-footed? *(Applause)*

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. That’s exactly right. *(Laughter)* Do you want to come back?

Bishop Rodgers: No.

Jeff: Okay.

Ted: I mean, the brother asked a good question.

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Jeff: Yes, he did.

Ted: It really has to do with maybe I’m really not a zygote in the first place.

Jeff: Yes, right.

Ted: And I think Jim Fitzgerald has a response to this. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Yes?

Jim: Because we’re fallen creatures, you know, what is the promise? It’s not just that He saves us, but he changes us, so that if there is any evidence of change in us, to me that’s a supernatural witness. It’s not something that we can do. It’s a gift, and we’re looking at Him.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right. You know, John Gerstner used to talk about three different things, and I can’t think of one of them. But they all sort of rhymed. The one was *introspection*, the other was *extraspection*. Are you remembering this?

Ted: The other was expectoration. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I don’t know. But what he used to talk about was can I look inside of me? He was talking about how one has assurance. Can I look inside of me and see one shred of love for God? Can I see one ounce of love for God? Is there something in me that loves the Lord?

And then *extraspection*. Can I look at my life? Does my life look like one that loves the Lord? And do others give me an affirmation in that, that sort of thing. And so he’s dealing with the subjectivity that really is there when we have to make this determination as to whether or not we are in the Lord, right?

Bishop Rodgers: That’s so important that my subjectivity is seen in the context of the word of God.

Jeff: Yes.

Don: Amen.

Bishop Rodgers: You separate the two and then you’re just left with yourself.

Jeff: That’s right.

Bishop Rodgers: Am I a zygote? Was I baptized by a sovereign God when He laid hands upon me through His body? That’s the objective thing that we lay hold of.

Jeff: We maintain His promise.

Ted: And that’s what Luther said.

Bishop Rodgers: That’s right.

Ted: Luther said that every time he doubted his faith he always came back to “I’ve been baptized.

Bishop Rodgers: And the rest of the liturgy.

Ted: And I’m getting to that. For believer’s baptism, that doesn’t make any sense.

Jeff: Yes, that doesn’t make any sense.

Ted: So Luther was wrong at that point.

Jeff: That’s right.

Bill McCoy: Does it make a difference? *(Laughter)*

Brave Man: Here we go.

Jeff: Here we go.

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Bill Stoltz: Well, what I look at is Galatians 5:22-23, while I’m trying to wrestle with do I have faith?

Transcriber’s Note: Galatians 5:22-23, ESV. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.*”

Bill: *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance,. Kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”* Those are fruits; fruits grow. Do you see the growth of that within yourself? And often other people will come to you and say, “You’ve changed. You’re different.”

Jeff: Yes.

Bill: And when we have faith we’re told in Scripture by God’s word that we will see these fruits and that we’ll have these fruits.

Jeff: Yes. You know what they say. “He got religion.” *(Laughter)* You know what we say. “No, religion got him.” *(Laughter)*

Ted: But that’s still not a satisfying answer, because in my prayers this morning that was one of the things I went through in my confession, confessing about my fruit-bearing, and how weak and how unsubstantial it is.

Jeff: Yes. But even if it is weak, to me that’s the idea, right? There are times when it will be weak and there are times when it will be strong. But I have to always look to Christ and not to the level of my fruit-bearing. But I look to my fruit-bearing as confirmation that the Christ who saves me, whether my faith is weak or strong, is bringing forth fruit, whether it’s thirty, sixty or a hundredfold, right?

Ted: Right. And not what others are saying about their amount of fruit, or that I feel like I’m bearing a lot of fruit. That’s the thing I’m objecting to.

Jeff: That’s right. Yes.

Bill McCoy: One clarifier when you talk about infant baptism and believers’ baptism. Those who celebrate infant baptism also celebrate believers’ baptism. If a person hasn’t been baptized as an infant and receives Christ, he should be baptized as an adult, if he is an adult.

Jeff: Yes. Very good.

Brian: It’s a light drop.

Jeff: A light drop. *(Laughter)* Go ahead.

Kirk: Going back to persevering, *“he who perseveres to the end will be saved”*, if I’m hearing you guys correctly, you know, no matter how disfigured and marred sin can make us, we persevere to the end. Our hope and our faith is still in the work of Christ.

Jeff: Yes.

Kirk: And based on that alone we will persevere. *(Unclear)* If I don’t persevere, what’s to become of me?

Jeff: Yes, and we’ll get to this the next time we get together, because we’ve obviously got two more points to go, and it’s after hours. But that’s all right. I mean, this is really good. If I don’t get through the outline, I’m always pleased when there’s a lot of discussion about the topic. That’s always good. But what I want to say is that what we’ll see is that there may even be a time of partial apostasy in a person. But what

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distinguishes between a partial and a full apostate is repentance, right? And so we always have to keep that in mind as well.

Kevin: Is it wrong to say it's a weakness that we have, to be low in our faith or high? We strive to be high in our faith at all times. But it's not a weakness to us or a fault in us to be in a low if we're always striving to be high. How do you maintain—

Jeff: Well, I think that if we're not near to God, (let's put it that way), if we are not having a sense of nearness to God, it could be that God has withdrawn in order to test us, right? I mean, we see that in Scripture. But it could be that I'm not doing things to cultivate nearness.

This is an overused illustration, but it's true. If I'm married but I'm constantly on the golf course, I'm constantly on business trips and I'm constantly away from my wife and family, I'm not going to have a sense of nearness to my family, right? And so I need to make a schedule that brings nearness and proximity to my wife and kids so that we can feel like a family.

And I think that is true with my relationship to God, right? If I'm constantly neglectful of prayer, Bible reading and the means of grace that are going to draw me near to Him, then it's a weakness in me, it's a sin in me that's keeping me from Him, right? Yes?

Bill Obaker: Just two points. That article that you referred to with Gerstner said “retrospection.”

Jeff: Retrospection, yes. Thank you.

Bill: And people actually google Gerstner in those three points. He has a very, very good paper on assurance. And he bases that on taking them to the Westminster Confession. Turretin might be helpful here, too.

Jeff: Yes. I'll look that up. Introspection, extraspection and retrospection. I knew it was a -tion. *(Laughter)* Yes?

Brave Man: I was just going to say that this may tie in with what you're talking about. **Brave Man:** I forgot what I was going to say. I just had time in a book one day. I think it was C.S. Lewis who said that faith does not put trust in itself. It puts trust in the One who is faithful.

Jeff: Yes.

Brave Man: And it tied back into Hebrews 12:2, which basically says, “*looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.*” It doesn't say, “looking unto our faith,” or “looking unto ourselves.” It's looking unto Jesus. And with the one who has been baptized, we can look back to the reality that God has claimed us in a very real way. I don't believe that any of us would say that baptism guarantees that we're going to heaven.

Jeff: Sure.

Brave Man: But He has become our Father. In a sense, He's like the prodigal father. And He will always love us. And if we don't receive His promise it's because we rebel. It's not because of anything that's wrong with Him. And He's always ready to receive us back when we come back, if we have strayed. That's objectively the fact that God has done the work. It's not we who have done it. That provides greater assurance for me.

Jeff: Okay. Yes? Okay, we've got a little bit of pushback here. *(Laughter)*

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Bishop Rodgers: Unless you repudiate it.

Jeff: Yes.

Bishop Rodgers: The very act of baptism and the promise of baptism is that you will go to heaven. So you believe that. If you reject that, then of course you're in trouble.

Ted: It's kind of opting out.

Bishop Rodgers: But you're denying your baptism when you opt out.

Ted: Right.

Jeff: Okay. On that note, uh-oh! We've got a little pushback.

Don: Non, no, it has nothing to do with that.

Jeff: Okay.

Don: Maybe you'll cover this next week. Is there a difference between the weight that we're to lay aside, *“to lay aside every weight, and sin which so easily ensnares us”*, or are they the same thing?

Transcriber's Note: NKJV.

Jeff: I'm not telling you that this week. *(Laughter)*

Ted: We ran out of time. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Yes. No, Don, we're going to talk about that next week.

Don: Good.

Jeff: All right. We'll talk next time. Let's pray. Father in heaven, thanks for this day, for the time You've given. Lord, we pray that You will continue to bring about in our own experience a confirmation of the truth that is in you. And Father, as You do, we pray that we would have a growing sense of approval. And Lord, we know that this growing sense of approval is contextualized in the great approval that You have bestowed upon Christ. And as we stand in Him, we stand with His approval. So we pray, Father, that You will bring that approval and our growing sense of Your approval together in the culmination of all things. And we pray it in Christ's name. amen.

Brave Men: Amen. *(Applause)*