

***Serving God for a Lifetime:***

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**Holding Fast to the End**

**1. Human Life: A Time of Trial**

- A. *"The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all"* (Ecc 9:11).
- B. If we live long enough ...
1. We will experience failure, disappointment and heartache. Friends will betray us or turn against us; children may reject the faith; we may be accused falsely.
  2. We may suffer financial ruin; our home destroyed by natural catastrophe. We may lose our health; our spouse may become incapacitated or otherwise unable to fulfill the role we had hoped for.
  3. It may be our lot to languish in a spiritually destitute environment; we may endure congregational turmoil or brotherhood-wide divisions; we may see beloved preachers or elders fall into immorality.
- C. In short, this world is full of treachery, tragedy and travail. NT full of warnings:
1. *"Sufficient for the day is its own trouble"* (Mt 6:34).
  2. *"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God"* (Ac 14:22).
  3. *"All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution"* (2 Tim 3:12).
  4. *"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake ..."* (Ph 1:29).
  5. *"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange things happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings ..."* (1 Pet 4:12-13).

**2. Fighting the Temptation to Quit – Heb 6:9-12**

- A. The Hebrew brethren are being warned against falling headlong into apostasy:
1. *"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief ..."* (3:12).

2. *"For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold ... steadfast"* (3:14).
  3. *"Let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it"* (4:1).
  4. *"Let us hold fast our confession"* (4:14).
  5. *"You have become dull of hearing ... you need someone to teach you again the first principles ... you have come to need milk and not solid food ..."* (5:11-12).
- B. The danger: *"It is impossible ... if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance"* (6:4, 6). We sugarcoat this by saying that they can't be forgiven so long as they remain unfaithful. But the passage says they "cannot," not "will not," be renewed unto repentance. If discouragement becomes despair, we can reach a *"point of no return."* We must not trifle with our faith.
- C. The exhortation – 6:9-12:
1. *"God is not unjust to forget ..."* our faithful service to Him (6:10). God is "scrapbooking" our lives; He knows what we have done even if no one else does.
  2. *"Each one of you show the same diligence ... until the end"* (6:11). Salvation is ultimately an individual matter. Others can encourage or discourage, but it is up to us – no excuses – to remain devoted to the Lord.
  3. *"Do not become sluggish ... through faith and patience inherit the promises"* (6:12). He goes on to tell them that they *"have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise ..."* (10:36).

### **3. When Life Gets Tough, Remember ...**

- A. That which doesn't kill you will make you stronger. *"Count it all joy when you fall into various trials ..."* (Jas 1:2-3). Look back at your life: Have you grown more from the times of hardship or the times of comfort and ease?
- B. There is still work to be done. When Elijah just wanted to die, God let him rest, gave him food, reduced his exaggeration *and then put him to work!* (1 Kgs 19). While our skills and faculties may diminish with age, we must be determined to *do all we can!* This is the way God wants us to live until our last breath.
- C. To focus on heaven (Col 3:1-4). Hardships remind us that we are sojourners; this world is not our final destination.

**Conclusion:** "Serving God for a Lifetime." There are pitfalls in every stage of life. God expects us to be faithful, whether young or old, new convert or seasoned veteran, male or female, American or foreigner, persecuted or at peace. God will help us grow so that we can meet the challenges that come through life.