

Message Transcript

ETERNAL ENDURANCE | I'VE GOT A WORD FOR YOU
ED NEWTON | OCTOBER 25, 2025

Aaron Brockett:

I am so excited to be able to introduce to you today our special guest speaker for the weekend, Pastor Ed Newton. Ed was born in Charlotte, North Carolina to two deaf parents. Ed became their voice and ears. And communication had to go beyond words. God has used that in a significant way in his life and ministry.

In 2016 he became the lead pastor of Community Bible in San Antonio, Texas. He and his wife, Stephanie, live with their four children: London, Lola, Liv, and Lawson. He is the author of several books.

I first got acquainted with Pastor Ed when a few of his videos and his sermons went viral online where there was just this powerful demonstration of the Holy Spirit's work within their gatherings as a church.

Later I had the privilege of meeting and getting to know Ed personally. And honestly, guys, he's one of the handful of preachers that I listen to almost every week just for my own spiritual growth.

I've only known him for a short time but I have come to love him like a brother and I honor him as a man who God is using in incredible ways. I've asked him to come with a fresh word from the Lord for our church that is going to encourage and challenge you. I can't wait to hear it.

So, would you please give a warm and rowdy Traders Point welcome to one of my pastors, my friend, Pastor Ed Newton.

Ed Newton:

Thank you so much. As we unite together all across our campuses I believe in faith that God has brought us together for such a moment like this. I believe in faith that God is greatly using you Traders Point because of the fact that I've been following you for the past several years and watching a move of God.



Can we take a moment because I want to look into a camera right now because I know for a fact, because I just got off of face time with Pastor Aaron, I know that he is watching. I want to look into a camera and I want to say to you, sir, that the anointing of God drips off of your life.

And I believe in faith that God has empowered you, equipped you to be the tip of the spear to reach the world all the way from Indianapolis to the ends of the earth. And God is using this church prolifically. And I believe that the best days are still yet to come.

Come on church, can we honor the man of God? He's watching. Pastor Aaron, we love you. We're grateful. And as it was mentioned on this campus, he'll be back next weekend kicking off a new sermon series .

But as we are united using technology across our campuses, it's an honor to be here. I come all the way from San Antonio, Texas. And it's one of the most highlighted moments for me, this particular year, to be a part of church that I've been watching and following and noticing.

So many people have been baptized at this campus and other locations. And for a church to embark on almost 2,000 people being baptized in Jesus' name, come on. If heaven celebrates over one, come on—I thought you were going to clap a little bit louder than that to be honest with you. It is a big deal when somebody doesn't get hell but they get heaven. And I believe in faith that God is greatly using you.

I want to preach a message today called Eternal Encouragement. Eternal encouragement, eternal endurance is something we want to speak to today. As we talk about eternal endurance, with a form of encouragement, I want to speak to somebody today who finds yourself in this journey of Jesus and you feel a little weary today.

I already feel it. I've felt it in multiple services already. Faith is rising. I believe in faith today that we're just going to understand that this journey is not for the faint of heart. God has called us not to sprint in a race but to endure, not just out of obligation but out of opportunity for the joy of our salvation.

I want to just begin in Hebrews, chapter 12. If you've got a Bible, why don't you go ahead and meet with me there. I want to read two verses. And this section of Scripture will be on the screens.



But let me see if I can put this in context today. As we look to the book of Hebrews we do not know who wrote the book of Hebrews. We know the Holy Spirit of God empowered men to write the Scripture—40 different authors, three different continents, three different languages.

The book of Hebrews, by the way, has been debated as to who actually wrote the book of Hebrews. Now, we know it's the Holy Spirit of God. But I believe in my humble opinion it's the apostle Paul and that's just a conversation for another day.

But when we think about why maybe I would come to the conclusion that it's the Apostle Paul it's because he uses sports terminology to talk about our walk with Jesus, and actually, our pursuit of Jesus.

I believe if the Apostle Paul was alive today he'd cheer for the Hoosiers. Can I get an amen from somebody? Come on—each year for the Colts, each year for the Pacers, each year for the Fever. Y'all with me? I mean all of them. Each year for all of them. Some of you in the room are going, "No Purdue?" We're like, "That's another conversation." Right? So, another conversation.

But when we talk about the fact that many of us who at some level understand what it means to be in a race... There are several components of a race. There is a starting line, the finish line. There are participants and there are spectators.

Now, I'm talking to many of you who go, "Okay, I've given my life to Jesus so where do I fit in this?" And that beginning point, the starting line is the moment that you crossed over into this journey as a son or daughter of the living God. You didn't earn it. By grace you have been saved through faith that not of yourself less anybody should boast.

So, I'm in this race, not because I deserve to be in this race, but Jesus has called me to be in this race. And one day there is a finish line that is coming for me and for you. And it's two particular scenarios that we do not know the date of. Number one: death. The book of James says life is like a vapor, here for a moment then gone. Hebrews 9:27 says that it's appointed unto man, or woman, to die once and then face the judgment.

There is a 100 percent chance you will die. Hate to break the news to you—100 percent chance you are going to die. Unless, come on, let me just emphasize the unless. If 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4 is true there is going to be a sound of a trumpet, the dead in Christ shall rise and those of us who are on the earth will be caught up in the air to meet our King face to face.



Come on, church can we receive that day? What a day that's going to be when we will see Him, behold His glory, and be reunited with the reality of our family and our friends who have gone before us. What a sweet, glorious day that is going to be.

That is our finish line. We either die and we get Jesus. He comes back and we get Jesus. It's why in Philippians, chapter 1, verse 21 the Apostle Paul goes, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." I live; I've got Jesus. I die; I've got Jesus. Come on. Help me preach this thing today. Help me preach this thing. It's a win/win scenario.

Meanwhile, while I'm on this earth I've got to be reminded of a few things. The finish line is unbeknownst, if you are the spectators, those people who don't know Jesus, who are watching us wondering why we do what we do, why we live the way that we live, the way we love each other and care for each other and lift each other's burdens along the way. They are watching, hopefully being inspired by the fact that it's all about Jesus. That one day they will put their faith and trust in Jesus.

Now, two verses. I want to read and this will be on the screen all across our campuses. Let me just read this to us and then we'll unpack it together. It says:

"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 reason why this message is Eternal Endurance, "the race that is set before us looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of 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." Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)

The way I like to teach is I like to extrapolate particular words and sometimes sentences that allow us to understand the significance of what we are studying today. And I want to draw attention to the first word which is the word therefore.

I failed English 099 in college, which by the way, if you don't know that, that's remedial English. And I failed it. I had to take it again. And Doctor McFarland was her name. And she would say, "Ed, why is it that you keep putting the therefore in the wrong place?" I'm like, "I just think the therefore should go in the middle of the sentence."



She goes, "No, a therefore has to be in the beginning of the sentence because it connects that to a previous sentence and you are making a connected thought." And I go, "Dr. McFarland, I'm sorry. Both of my parents were deaf. They spoke American sign language with their hands. So, my grammar is not the best."

I could use some proper English all day. I'm the king of the run on sentence. Can I get a witness from anybody else? I love a run on sentence. I put punctuation in the wrong place: commas where periods should be. Semi-colons are my favorite, the choice to stop or keep on going. And I just keep on going.

But the word therefore, therefore, is connected back to Hebrews, chapter 11. Oh dear God—all of the men and women who have gone before us. We stand on the shoulders of their sacrifice. The word, we are so surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, that word witness is the word martyr. Not just people who were lip professors but people who were heart professors. People who laid down their life for the sake of the gospel. Some were sawn into.

Can I just say this? They didn't bow the knee to nobody except King Jesus. They didn't bow the knee to culture; they didn't bow the knee to any other foreign God. They bowed the knee only to the One, "Therefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." That's who we are talking about. Old Testament, New Testament Yahweh God. Elohim. Messiah. The Savior is coming.

My grandmother, even though she is not in Hebrews, chapter 11... I don't know about you, but I have a running tally of names in my life who are not in Scripture but have had significant impact and influence on me. My grandmother, who is in heaven, she has been in heaven for several years now, her name is Elizabeth Lawson.

My wife and I have four children: London, Lola, Liv, and Lawson. We named our youngest of four children after my grandmother. We adopted our son from Ethiopia, Africa when he was two years old. He is now 17. And he is Lawson. And every time I hear his name I think about my grandmother, Elizabeth Lawson.

We called her Granny Boo. I don't know if you've got nicknames for your grandparents around here, but we've got nicknames. So we called her Granny Boo. And it was the coolest nickname in all of human history because she was Boo. That's what we call her. Not Monster's Inc. Boo, but Granny Boo. Alright?



And in that moment as we called her Granny Boo, she was a person of legacy. Let me just see if this resonates with Traders Point today. She was Baptist/Pentecostal. Put those together, she was Bapticostal. And she loved Jesus. She prayed a Billy Graham evangelistic crusade prayer over me every time I stayed with her.

We would hold hands after church. She went to the First Baptist Church in Pilot Mountain, North Carolina. That ought to ring a bell to somebody (I'm dating myself. Yes I'm 50) it's called Andy Griffith. There were three towns that were mentioned: Mayberry, Mount Airy, Mount Pilot.

My grandmother was a beautician for 65 years. She owned a beauty shop called Bonny's and Boo's Beauty Shop. She loved Jesus. She prayed this prayer over me. She'd pray a prayer like this. I don't know if you know anybody like this. She'd pray this prayer, "Lord Jesus, I pray my grandson, Ed, would not go to hell."

At that moment I was kind of like one eye, like winking at her like, "Okay is this going to go on?" "And one day I pray that he gets saved and gives his life to Jesus." And then she'd P.S. the prayer, "And one day would You call him to be a preacher of the gospel? Amen."

And all of a sudden I looked at my grandmother and go, "Granny Boo, thank you for your patience with me. This whole Jesus thing, I don't understand it." She'd smile. I said, "But would you stop praying that I'll be a preacher? Preachers are some of the most socially awkward people I've ever met in my entire life. They are not even cool. They don't even watch sports. They definitely don't skateboard and hoop and play ball."

And all of a sudden I realized that I had a wrong idea of what pastors look like because you've got a cool one here in Pastor Aaron.

And when I think about that moment, my grandmother was praying for me, she's the "therefore" in my life. When I think about my grandmother, the day I gave my life to Jesus...

I wasn't raised in church, if I could just say that for the encouragement of somebody in the room at one of our locations, this location as well. You may be in this room and you go, "Well, I don't speak fluent Christian ease and I don't know how this works and I don't even know where to go in the Bible and I have to look up the page numbers." It's okay. That was me.



And I ended up at a Wednesday night Baptist prayer meeting. For some of you Baptist folks, anybody Baptist here? Obviously, I'm not at the Baptist Church anymore because of things that I would learn in regard to like, "Man we're going to sing I Surrender All 47 times until somebody comes forward in the service." The only people laughing right now are the Baptists people. That's why you are at Traders Point. Alright?

So, I grew up Baptist. No criticisms to the Baptist tradition, but for me I didn't know any of those things. And while at a Wednesday night Baptist prayer meeting—and, by the way a prayer meeting, teenagers were not in that. I'm the only teenager in the room sitting in the front row because I'm getting the interpreter signing for my Mom and my Dad.

It's my fifteenth birthday. My Mom and Dad actually saying out loud, "We're not celebrating your birthday, you've made our life very difficult." And that's a whole other long story because I was almost expelled out of school. Hello, I'm the preacher today. So, my grandmother was praying along the way.

That night I gave my life to Jesus. I don't know if you know this or not, but for me personally I walked forward at what would be considered an inappropriate time to actually talk to the preacher while he was doing what I'm doing right now. He goes, "Does anybody want forgiveness?" I walked forward. Didn't know that that was not the right time to talk to the preacher.

I walked forward and I said, "I want this Jesus." He connected me to this guy. I thought his first name was Deacon. I don't know if you know this, but there is a religious position in a church called a deacon. And I didn't know that was a title. I called him Deacon. I was like, "Hey, Deacon. My name is Ed. It's nice to meet you."

He was like, "Come with me." He wore a brown polyester suit. I thought he worked for UPS. We ended up in this small, little classroom. He led me to Jesus through the King James y'all. I mean he read it. It sounded like Shakespeare. But my heart, oh my heart was gripped. I gave my life to Jesus on my fifteenth birthday.

My first phone call? Come on, Granny Boo. "Granny Boo..." I don't know if you know this but phones had wires attached to them then so I knew exactly where she was at. She was kind of walking back and forth in the hallway with that long cord that went about 50 feet. And she's just walking back and forth.

She says, "Edward, you okay?" I said, "Granny Boo, listen. I just gave my life to Jesus tonight and I just need you to know." And because she's Baptist she's started shouting and those slippers started shuffling. And I could hear her. She was just moving and dancing and, "God, thank You that You did it again."



And all I know is that when I became a senior in high school and I couldn't pass the SAT—this ought to be an encouragement to somebody—perfect score 1,600, I got a 540. Somebody come on. Faith is rising for somebody today. I got a 540.

Went on to a Bible college to play basketball. Don't be too impressed. It was a Division 14. Nobody cared. But let me tell you who cared. My grandmother cared. And because I owed some money because it wasn't a full deal for me and my mom and dad couldn't afford to send me off to college, I'd get anonymous checks.

I'd end up in the financial office. Mr. Johnson was his name and I'd go, "How much do I own this semester?" and he goes, "Nothing." I go, "Mr. Johnson, that's impossible. You just sent me a bill that said that I owed thousands of dollars. I'm here to sign a financial aide loan. And he goes, "Not today. An anonymous check came in from Pilot Mountain, North Carolina. Do you know anybody from Pilot Mountain, North Carolina? I go, "You haven't met my Granny Boo?" He's like, "Granny who?" I said, "Granny Boo."

This is the prayer warrior. And let me say this out loud. I'm the first one in my family to graduate from college. My mom and dad never finished the 7th grade. I've got two master's degrees and I got a doctorate degree by the time I was 30. And watch this. Because I had a grandmother who was a therefore. Are you with me? A therefore. She was there for me.

And before we talk about this race that we've been called to, can I just make this statement? I know that it's not going to sound prolific, but I believe it is prophetic. Let me just say this. Could you be a therefore somebody?

Could you be that person who somehow, somehow doesn't just call out people but calls up people. That you illuminate worth. When you walk in the room the atmosphere changes. You shift the culture. You don't conform to it, you transform it. You speak blessing, honor, worth, value by the excellence of what you do that points to a greater reality that there is a therefore in your life and you stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before you.

And it is a reminder, just like my grandmother taught me, "Jesus, Edward, is always worth it." And today He's still always worth it. And as we think about the therefore it goes on and it says because of the therefore:

"... we are surrounded by so great a crowd of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely,"



The words weight and sin are two distinctly different words. The word Weight is the complexities and the challenges and the heaviness of life: anxieties, battles, trials. It's the reason why today's message is Eternal Endurance because everything in you...

I'm talking to somebody today who feels like giving up. Can I say this to you? Not today. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not the next day. Why? Because Jesus didn't bring you this far to drop you now. And what He brings to us is for us and even though we don't want the pain, God repurposes the pain, He takes the broken pieces. He makes the masterpieces. That's who He is.

And everything that you have been brought through, can I remind you that God will deliver you from it and build a story of His faithfulness in and through you? So, I just need you to hang on a little longer. I need you just to fight a little deeper. I need you to remind yourself of what Christ has done for you and those who have spoken into your life.

Listen to me. That moment that somebody prophesied over your life and that moment somebody began to speak into your life, it wasn't accidental. They were on assignment to remind you who you are, Whose you are, and why you are. Come on, church. Can we receive that today?

But these weights, if we could be honest, are heavy. They prevent you from running fully, with everything that Christ has called you to run because you're carrying things that you should never be carrying.

That's why Psalm, 34, verse 18 says, "He is near the brokenhearted and he saves those who are crushed in spirit."

That's why 1 Peter 5:7 says, "Cast your cares on Him for He cares for you." It literally means to throw your weights at Him. He wants these things.

That's why Philippians, chapter 4, verse 6 says, "Do not be anxious about anything but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your requests known to God and the peace of God shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

But then he talks about the sins. The things in our lives that we have a tendency, that we have been delivered from, set free from, but we go back to the weight, not of complexities but of carnality—the things that we know that are the proverbial Kryptonite in our life. It's the thing that we keep going back to, and back to, and back to.



It's why Jeremiah, chapter 2 teaches that we are committed to evil because we have forgotten God and we have hewn out cisterns that hold no water.

We keep saying we are thirsty and we are hungry but yet Jesus is the fount of living water and He's the bread of life. But we keep seeking to find our satisfaction in the things of this world. And can I say this to you? The things of the world will not satisfy. They may create a temporary feeling of satisfaction, but they will leave you empty. Sin will take you further than you ever have imagined in your life.

But I want to just remind somebody today that Christ came to set you free. He not only died on the cross to deliver you from your sin, He died on the cross to deliver you from your shame. That's for somebody today. You are not the summary of all of your bad decisions because I've got a God who calls you son and daughter and nothing can separate you from the love of Christ: neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor demons, nor present, nor future. Nothing can separate you from the love of Christ.

And here's the greatest reminder: 1 John, chapter 4, verse 4, "Greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world." Which reminds us He will never leave us nor forsake us. He is faithful to us despite our faithlessness.

And here's a reminder, just a simple illustration. While I was in high school my dad took me to what is called a Monster Truck rally. Basically that's code for a redneck super bowl. That's what that is. And when your dad is deaf he likes loud things—not because he can hear them but because he could feel them. And there is nothing more exhilarating than to watch my dad actually enjoy something, because you really don't have to know the words, you can just feel it.

I was enamored by Big Foot, enamored by Grave Digger and all the other massive monster trucks that would crush other vehicles and even crush buses. But it wasn't that that captivated my attention. It was basically, in my humble opinion, an event that a lot of people didn't watch. It was called the tractor pull. Nothing really cool about this to a lot of people in comparison to Big Foot and Grave Digger.

What's so cool about a drag race is a big wheel and some little wheels pull a weight. And I'll never forget watching this. This tractor with big wheels, little wheels, multiple motors, one driver is connected to a weight that gets progressively heavier.



Can you see it in your mind? It just gets heavier and heavier and heavier. And it's seeking to pull this weighted sled as far as it can go. And then there is a moment where it cannot go any further because it's now stuck and it begins to be embedded in the soil of that particular stadium. And all of a sudden. I'll never forget. They would measure the distance, put it on the Jumbo Tron and who could go the farthest is the one who wins.

I was not enamored by all of that. But I was enamored by the fact that there was a guy wearing a white hat, white shirt, white pants, white shoes who walked onto a muddy track and had one job, which was to stand between the tractor and the weight. And his one job was to pull a pin and to look at the driver and give him a thumbs up as to say, "You are free."

The Spirit of God dropped a message as a high school student that I cannot forget. This is exactly what Christ did for you and for me. He left the glory of heaven. Robed in righteousness, God without sin put on flesh and walked amongst us and the muddy mess of our life.

And He came to do one thing. To separate you from a weight that you were never intended to carry. And He did one thing when He went to the cross and He walked out of that grave as the undefeated, undisputed heavy weight champion of the world, He pulled the pin, took the keys from the devil and He allows us to walk in victory. And because of Jesus we're free.

And here's the thing I can't get out of my mind. If we are free then why do we keep backing up to the weight that we've been set free from? Why are we carrying stuff that we were never intended to carry. For where the Spirit of the Lord is, where He is, there is—come on church, say it to me—freedom. Are you free? Christ has come to set us free and the writer says to us:

"let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,"

But notice the word run and notice the word endurance because it is a beautiful word picture of what this is about in the Christian faith. Run is where we get the word agony and endurance is the moment I want to give up. And I remind myself often, when I face difficult things—I have battled anxiety, I have battled depression, I have battled things in recent years that Christ has set me free from.

But why do I find my soul so anxious? Why is it possible for even a preacher to go two days without brushing his teeth and he can't get out of bed in depression? Come on, I'm not just preaching to you, I'm preaching to me. Let us run with endurance.



In those moments when you don't feel like going another step, there is the Holy Spirit of God that just somehow, somehow gets you to where you need to be. And you've got to be reminded that in this journey there are going to be moments where you don't want to do this thing. Can we actually say this out loud? Where we go, "This is too hard." And it's in that moment that we have to ask the question, "Will I do this in my own strength or through the power of the Holy Spirit?"

Zachariah, chapter 4: Not by power, not by might, but by the Spirit. "I can't do this no more. Holy Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead, give me the want to. God, inspire me. Because I feel overwhelmed."

Yes, there is a real enemy. 1 Peter, chapter 5 teaches us that the devil roams around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But it feels as if I'm... I wonder if I'm talking to somebody today, "I'm my own worst enemy because I can't believe what God believes about me—that I'm more than a conqueror. Nothing, nothing can separate me from the love of Christ. Why do I not believe this? Because I've allowed discouragement to flood my soul as if it is over."

But today, somebody on the campus, somebody in this campus is hearing this let us run with endurance. Why? Once more, not a sprint, it's a marathon. What if today is the day that Christ comes again? What if today is the day that we actually see Jesus? Because if you stay ready you ain't got to get ready. Come on. Let me preach this thing.

And we have to somehow go, "Okay, today is not just about checking a box. Today is going, 'Today, whatever I'm carrying, I've got to lay it down. The sins that I'm wrestling with I lay down because You are worth it.'"

But I've got to embrace the fact that even when I think that I'm not feeling happy, happiness is not the purest goal of my life. Holiness has to be the purest goal of my life.

I was inspired to run a marathon several years ago. I say this humbly. I've run 17 marathons, only to tell you that I understand endurance or perseverance. It's kind of a morbid sport to be honest. How far can you really go in the midst of pain and anguish? My first marathon was significantly slow, almost five hours. I got passed by a six-month pregnant woman.



And I know that specifically because it was in the month of December that I ran this marathon, St. Jude's marathon in Memphis, Tennessee. And my wife scheduled a photographer to come over for the holidays and take a picture.

And when she walked in the room I was like, "You look really familiar. Did you just run the marathon?" And she said this out loud. She goes, "I did. It wasn't my best time. I was six months pregnant." I go, "You beat me." Yes, that's what happened.

I remember going, "I must have run the slowest marathon." So, I began to do a little Google research just out of curiosity. I was like, "Who ran the slowest marathon?" Maybe I could find encouragement by their lack of performance. And I found it. I found it. It was the slowest marathon—four days, two hours, 47 minutes, and 12 seconds.

And in the moment of going, "I didn't do so bad." I continued to read down and was introduced to a guy named Bob Wieland who did not run the marathon with his legs, but actually with pads on his hands catapulted himself for four days, two hours, 47 minutes, and 12 seconds.

And I found myself going, "I've got to find out what he said at the end of the race. And ask him why." And he said this, "I didn't come to start a race, I came to finish one."

And I wonder today if I could look at somebody and go, "I know you don't feel like running." I know for some of you, you've stumbled and faltered and failed and you just go, "Maybe I've just messed this whole thing up."

No, you've not messed this whole thing up. You're not powerful enough to get out of the grip and grasp of Jesus. He's got you. He'll never fail you. He'll never let you go. John 10:27-28: Nothing and no one can snatch you out of the hands of the Father.

Can I tell you what Jesus is doing right now? Get this downloaded in your spirit. He's pulling you up and pushing you forward. And here's the promise. He's running, not just along side of you but the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God living in you is moving you to a reality that Jesus is worth it because we've got to seek His face in all of this.

And that's what verse 2 is talking about: Fix your eyes on Jesus.



So, what's the motivation to somehow, someway, in this moment to go, "Jesus, I've got to get back up." Here's the truth of it. "Because you've called me for something so much more. It's not just me living my life. God, You want to use me to change the world, and my world is my circle of influence. And somehow, God, You've got to help me get back up today."

And for the one who feels as if they are the weary runner in this thing we call Christianity, whatever weight, whatever sin, Christ has come to set us free and He goes, "But here's how you run. You run with your eyes on Jesus." And here's what verse 2 says. His face is what we pursue:

"looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of 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."

Now, watch this. Looking to Jesus and then all of a sudden the writer uses this athletic terminology: author, start line, finisher of our faith. So, when Jesus came to this world the writer says, "Okay. He stepped into this journey of 33 years. For 30 years He lived in obscurity. And the three last years He profoundly impacted the world by the way He lived His life. Ultimately, the way He died on that cross and He who knew no sin became sin, that we might become the righteousness of God."

And while Jesus was moving, every step, one step at a time... Because this is what Christianity is. It's not perfection, by the way, Christianity is not perfection, it's pursuing Jesus. That's what Christianity is. Our eyes focused on Him, fixed on Him. Why? Because He's the author, He started the race, and He will finish the race.

And when He was on the cross, hello, on the cross He goes, "It is finished." That is why the Scripture says He is the finisher. What He started in you He will finish in you when you see Him face to face.

And the Bible tells us that while He was on this earth He endured, Eternal Endurance is the message title today, but He endured what He endured because of joy. Come on. Say the word joy.

Now the word joy is significant in verse 2. That while He was on this earth there was a virtue that we find in Galatians, chapter 5: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And so Jesus is the embodiment of what joy looks like.



But what was the joy, what was the motivation for Jesus to endure what He endured. Because when we think about the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. You go, "Ed, what does the word joy have in connectivity to the word cross because the cross signifies He was beaten, smitten, scourged, blasphemed, dishonored and the full wrath of God was poured out on Jesus because Psalm 5:4 says God can't look upon evil. And He turns His back and we actually hear the words of Jesus, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?' That doesn't sound like joy. What's joyful about all of that?"

And the answer is found in Jude, chapter 1 (there is only one chapter) verse 24. It says this: To Him who presents you before God blameless did so with great joy.

You go, "Ed, why did He endure what He endured?" Are you ready for this one? You. What about you? You are like, "Ed, there are not a lot of things that are lovely about me." I know. But here's the promise. And I would say this out loud. There are not a lot of things that are lovely about me as well, but God looks at us just as if we have never sinned. We know Romans 3:23:

"...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

But brother and sister, read the next verse. But we:

"have been justified freely by His grace..." (NIV)

Which means God looks at us as if we've never sinned. Like, not guilty. And all of a sudden Jesus reminds us why He was on this earth. What was the motivator for Him to finish His course? Joy. What joy? That He could present you before God blameless..

So, what's the motivation for me and for you to get back up and pursue Jesus? It's the joy of my salvation—once sinner now son or daughter of a living God. When in reality there is an enemy that accuses us according to Revelation 12, day and night. Do you know this Traders Point? At all of our campuses, do you know that the enemy accuses you day and night?

But I love verse 11:

"the enemy has been conquered by the blood of the Lamb and the word of your," what? "testimony."

What's your testimony? "I've got Jesus." And Jesus has got you. And we understand one day, what a day this is going to be, we are going to get to see Him face to face.



And here's the question I've got to leave you with. Are we running to Him or are we running from Him?

I'll close with this. In the sacredness of this moment let me see if I can move us to a place of a visual picture of what this invitation looks like.

I was traveling from Charleston, West Virginia to Baton Rouge, Louisiana and I had a layover in Memphis where we used to live. And I remember calling my wife. My wife's name is Stephanie. We'd been married 27 years at this time. We were fairly new in our marriage and our kids were little and I'm on the road 200 days a year preaching in middle school and high school camps and I'm a youth evangelist.

And I say to my wife, "Baby, I need you to meet me at the airport. I can't come home. I've got an hour-and-a-half layover. There is an Arby's. Can we have lunch together?" And I get back on the plane, "I can't go another week without seeing you."

While I'm getting off of the plane you can only imagine how every second matters in this layover. I'm shoulder to shoulder with a soldier who just was telling some people around me that he was getting home from Iraq.

I don't know about you, but I am so motivated by our military men and women. We live in a country where we can preach Jesus because of the fact that it's not free but men and women laid down their life for a greater reality for us.

So, I'm just in awe of this young man. And I stereotype, like, "Man, here's the deal. There's going to be a mom or a dad or a grandparent." And sure enough, as we get through the security check point, that wasn't true, it was his wife. I've watched a lot of goodbyes, but this particular day I was going to watch a hello. And I'm shoulder to shoulder with this soldier with a big ruck sack, about 45 pounds.

And he sees her. It was like a scene from The Notebook. You know what I'm talking about? He just stops. So I'm like looking at this dude. And all of a sudden he takes off his backpack and he starts running toward his wife.

While he's running I'm now looking up at her. She's got a two-year-old pressed to her leg and she's got a brand new baby in her arms. She's already dropped the Welcome Home Dad sign. And she takes this brand new baby and it dawns on me, "This soldier has missed the birth of his second child. And this is the first time he's laying eyes on this precious gift."



And he's looking at his wife and he's looking at his two-year-old. And all of a sudden he starts running and he slides on his knees all the while... Everybody look right here, all across our campuses. All the while his wife was holding out this baby like this [palms up arms extended] and he is running, running to this gift.

And the Spirit just put a message in my heart: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. And we're running to Him or we are running from Him.

But watch this picture. When he saw the gift he took off what was weighing him down, and he actually left it with me. He just dropped it and started running.

Can I say that this is the picture of today's invitation? All across our locations this is the invitation. What is holding you back from running to a God who gave you Jesus? Who died for all of your sin and came back from the dead so that you could live victoriously? What is holding you back? Today we lay down these weights.

With every head bowed, every eye closed across all of our campuses we believe in faith today that souls could be saved, lives could be changed. We believe in faith today that whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. And if you want to do that today... I prayed this prayer when I was 15 years old, not the exact words because it's not about the words, it's the attitude of your heart.

If you want to give your life to Jesus today, we've seen souls saved multiple services and we believe in faith that today will be the same. If you want to give your life to Jesus: A, B, C. Admit that you are a sinner. Believe that Jesus died for you. C, call upon His name. Do you want to do that today?

Let's pray this prayer based upon God's Word. And say this to Jesus, "Lord Jesus, I'm not perfect for I have sinned. But I believe You died for me. And right now I call on Your name. Save me. Change me. I give You my life."

If you prayed that prayer in faith calling on the name of Jesus, all of heaven celebrates that decision. We would love the opportunity to celebrate with you this decision. There is going to be a QR code on the screen. You can definitely give us some information. We would love to follow up.

Can we just have the people of God celebrate new brothers and sisters in Christ? If you gave your life to Jesus would you just raise your hand. Come on. We're clapping. If you gave your life to Jesus hold it up above your ear. Anybody in the house of God today? For your courage today we clap, we join in with the angels of heaven.



We're going to take a moment. Let's stand together all across our campuses. Our response teams will be in different locations. If you gave your life to Jesus, could you walk up to one of the response team members and go, "I gave my life to Jesus." Be ready for that hug. Be ready for that high five. That word of blessing.

And if you are going, "Ed, I've already done that. What's my response?" Lay down your weights. Lay down your sins. You can do that now. I want to encourage you. Why don't you talk to a response leader at one of our locations, this campus as well, and go, "Man, I just need somebody to pray with." Your weights are too heavy to carry outside this door. So, in faith today just put them and the feet of Jesus. I'm going to pray that God will give you courage to walk forward and talk to a response team leader.

Father, we thank You for today. By Your grace and Your mercy You have set us free. God, I pray today that You would allow us to experience the freedom that You have called us to. I pray for eternal endurance for the weary soul, lift their head to the hills in which my help comes from.

God, thank You that we have all that we need for life and godliness. God, help the one who has fallen to get back up again and put their face toward Your direction. In Jesus name. And all in the house say: Amen. Amen.

Come on. Let's clap together. Receive this thing as we respond.

