

Strand #3 A Captain-Savior Bringing Us to Glory

Hebrews 2:5-13

Giving up.

Quitting.

Dropping out of the race. Failing to finish.

Throwing in the towel.

Have you ever “given up”? Ever a time or a situation in your life when you simply “threw in the towel”? Most believe that expression originated from the boxing arena.¹ Perhaps first used in (January) 1913 when a sports reporter for the *Ft. Wayne Journal-Gazette* described how a boxer named Murphy was pummeling an opponent named Burns, who had become defenseless. The reporter wrote,

“Murphy went after him, landing right and left [on his] undefended face. The crowd importuned referee (a Mr.) Griffin to stop the fight, and a towel was thrown from Burns' corner as a token of defeat.”

Have you ever “thrown in your towel and quit” on something you should have stayed with, something you should have seen through to the end...but you just quit? I don't know about you, but I can remember every time I've quit on something when I should have kept going.

I was a second year student at Dallas Theological Seminary, and I was struggling with the books and the deluge of assignments. In an early preaching class – one in which you had to outline the key ideas from a Bible passage in the original language, then come up with a preaching outline that was relevant, craft a 15 minute sermon, and deliver it to your classmates and to the professor who sat in a back booth and commented on your teaching on a tape you would watch later.

The morning I stood up to preach, I had no clear idea on what the passage I was assigned really meant. I had a very lame preaching outline, no helpful illustrations, and I was supposed to fill up 15 minutes.

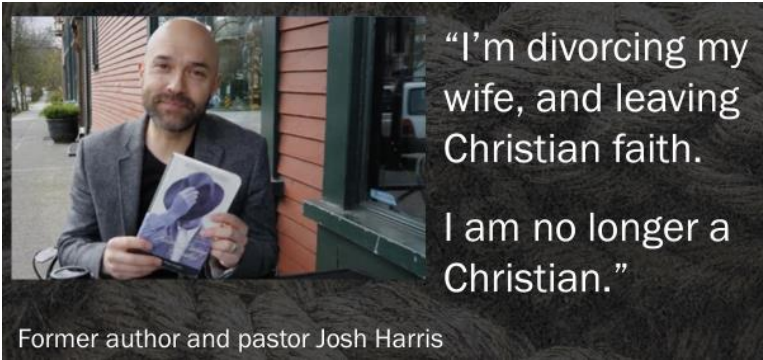
Well, I started in, but it soon evident that this short sermon would not make the hall of fame. I remember how the minutes dragged, and how I stumbled around...and finally, somewhere short of the 15 minute mark, I “threw in the towel.” I muttered something like, “I'm sorry, this isn't going anywhere, I'm done.” And I simply walked off the platform and sat in my seat.

Just before turned in my sitting down, I saw Dr. Duane Litfin's head come up from behind the mic and the half-glass wall. He strode up to the front, turned to look at me, and spoke 15-16 words I have never forgotten. Quote, “*David, I don't care how bad you think it is, you never quit. You always finish.*”

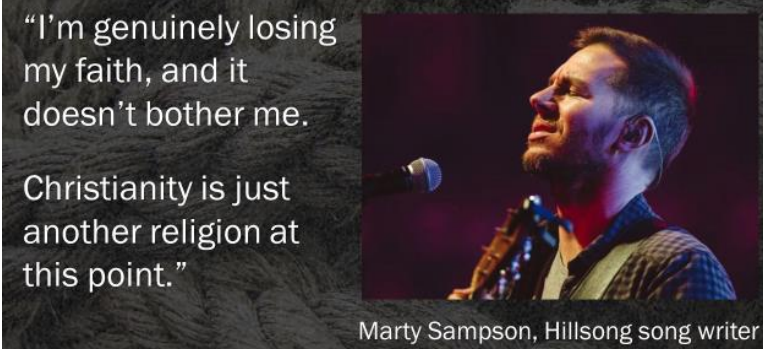
You will excuse me today when I say that too often today we are surrounded by quitting. By giving up. There are too many who are “throwing in the towel” on Christ. Some are famousⁱⁱ

- **Katy Perry** was raised in an evangelical Christian household. Her dad was a preacher. But when Katy rose to fame with her 2008 hit song “I Kissed a Girl,” she threw away her faith, boasting, “I don’t believe in a heaven or a hell or an old man sitting on a throne.”
- **Comedian Kathy Griffin** calls her Catholic Church training and roots “stupid.” When winning a 2007 Emmy, her speech declared, “A lot of people come up here and thank Jesus for this award. I want you to know that no one had less to do with this award than Jesus. Suck it, Jesus. This award is my God now!”
- **Brad Pitt** was raised by two devout Baptist parents. Pitt calls his Christian upbringing “stifling.” He grew up “being told God is going to take care of everything...and it doesn’t always work out that way...but you’re told it is *God’s will*. I’ve got my issues...you don’t want to get me started.”
- Add to that list **Orlando Bloom**, George Clooney, Julia Roberts, Anne Hathaway

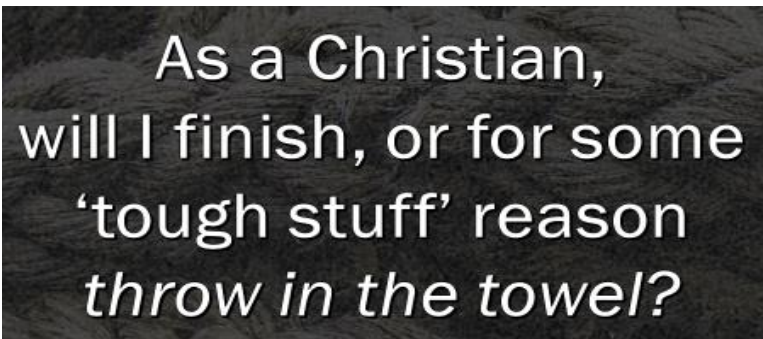
This past summer (July 2019)...at age 43ⁱⁱⁱ



Two weeks later, Hillsong songwriter Marty Sampson declared,^{iv}



How about you? Does it matter to you whether or not you will finish?



In the final 3 weeks of our CORD OF THREE STRANDS teaching, we must concentrate on the “strand” in our cord Who is most important. The Strand of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our being “intertwined with Him” is the key to not quitting, or to put it positively, to finishing well. This truth is our confident focus.

***My confidence is in a Savior who's
been there, done that, and is
(most importantly) in charge of my salvation***

Will you turn in your Bibles (p.1001 ESV) to the letter written by the Holy Spirit to a group of Christians known as the Hebrews? This 13 chapter letter to them, and to us, has one key idea –

***There's no one like God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
So!! Don't throw in the towel.***

This priceless letter declares the reasons – found in the person, work, and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, why Dr. Lifeston's words to me ring true...“that no matter how bad you think it is, you never quit.” Why? Because we have a Savior, a key strand in our cord, who's been there, done, that, and is in charge of my salvation. He has already, successfully, pioneered the way.

Reason/Week #1

**We can finish because the Lord Jesus Christ,
having suffered even through death for us, is
bringing God's many sons/daughters to glory**

We can finish well...Here is what Hebrews chapter 2 teaches about HOW.

First, to finish well, we must **PAY** growing
ATTENTION to our **great SALVATION**
Hebrews 2:1-3,5-8

Hebrews 2:1-3 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

Hebrews 2:5-8 For it was not to angels that **God subjected the world to come**, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere,
“What is man, that you are mindful of him,
or the **son of man**, that you care for him?
You made him for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned him with glory and honor,
putting everything in subjection under his feet.”

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

For just a few minutes, will you please pay attention with me to what the Holy Spirit says in these sentences?

#1 As a Christian, I must PAY MORE ATTENTION, not less, to **the great salvation** God is bringing into my life. Verse 1. If I pay “less attention,” I am more susceptible to drifting away.

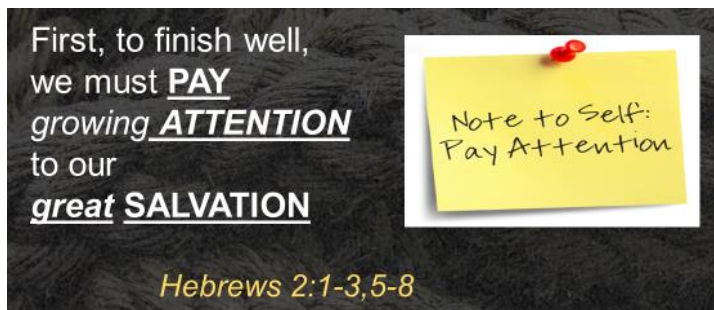
#2 This **GREAT SALVATION** (God is bringing into my life) is more than just being forgiven of sin or having some vague hope of heaven. It is about being PREPARED FOR and GIVEN glorious ENTRANCE INTO (vs.5) the **WORLD TO COME** in which JESUS is CROWNED as ABSOLUTE LORD along with those who have finished well.

May I ask you something? How much have you discovered in the last year about the GREAT SALVATION God has promised to bring into your life? Could you explain “your salvation” to someone else? Not only the past “salvation” you have experienced, but the present “salvation” you are experiencing, and (even more thrillingly) the future “salvation” you have the opportunity to experience? Is this great salvation the passion and hope of your life? Do you talk about it with others? When it comes to **this great salvation** are you the boy on the left, or the boy on the right?

OUR GREAT SALVATION

- **Hebrews 1** describes the coming salvation as the coming era in human history when God will bring THE FIRSTBORN (Jesus) back into the world (1:6), the moment when God the Father will anoint God the Son with the “oil of gladness above His companions” (1:9), the era in which God the Father has finally made all of Jesus’ enemies the footstool under His feet (1:13)
- **Hebrews 2** describes the coming salvation as a new WORLD TO COME over which Jesus will have complete, Lordship control (2:5-8), the time with all the faithful sons and daughters will be BROUGHT TO GLORY (2:10) and FULLY SANCTIFIED (2:11)
- **Hebrews 3-4** describes the coming salvation as the era in human history in which we will fully ENTER INTO GOD’S REST (4:6-10).
- Hebrews 6 describes the coming salvation as the era in which we will COMPLETELY INHERIT GOD’S PROMISES (6:12) because we have run our race with faith and patience
- **Hebrews 7** describes the coming salvation as as that time when Jesus our HIGH PRIEST saves us COMPLETELY...”to the uttermost!”
- Hebrews 9 describes our coming salvation as the FINAL RESCUE we have been EAGERLY WAITING FOR (9:28)
- **Hebrews 10** describes it as THE DAY of GOD (10:25), a day of GREAT REWARD for those who have endured without quitting the tough stuff (10:35)
- Hebrews 11 describes it as the era when ALL THE GREAT FAITH-SAINTS of history will finally be MADE PERFECT **with us!** (11:39...they’ve had to wait for us!)
- **Hebrews 12** describes our great salvation as finally COMING to “Mt Zion, to the city of the living God, to innumerable angels in festal gathering and to the assembly of THE FIRSTBORN who are enrolled in heaven” (12:11-23), to “receiving an kingdom that cannot be shaken (12:28)
- **Hebrews 13** describes our great salvation as understanding that we have HERE “no lasting city” but rather we are seeking “A CITY THAT IS TO COME” (13:14).

Wow...and that's just from 1 book of the NT? It seems we have all the time in the world to invest in living in this temporary world, and no time at all for understanding and preparing for the enduring and eternal WORLD TO COME. How can that be?



Second, to finish well, we have **A CAPTAIN-SAVIOR** who was **MADE PERFECT** through our tough (including death). – Hebrews 2:9-10

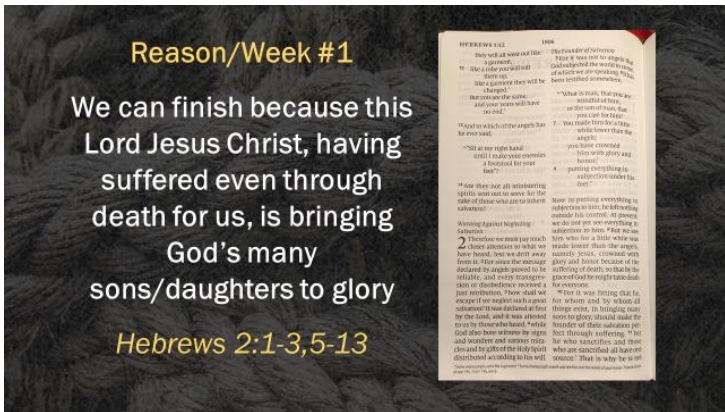
There are many questions we might ask to explore these important verses. Here are two key ones.

First, what does the Spirit mean by calling Jesus “the **founder** of their salvation” (2:10)?

Helpful English words to translate ἀρχηγός include “leader, founder, originator” or better, “pioneer.” It can mean “someone who originates.” But perhaps best is the word “captain” (as in KJV) for, in Greek military usage, it described “the unique commander of an army who *went ahead of his men and blazed a trail for them.*”^v Someone who was the first through the tough stuff, securing salvation, and opening up the way to victory. Please NOTE: It matters what you think about Jesus Christ.

Second (question), what does the Spirit mean in saying that that CAPTAIN was “**made perfect** through suffering” (2:10). I mean, if Jesus is God the Son, and God is already sinless and perfect, how could God the Son “*be made perfect*”? The Greek phrase “made perfect” (τελειωσαι) means “to be completed, to be fully experienced and equipped.” When God became a human being, His human full experience of suffering, His human experience of having his human life taken from Him in brutal suffering crucifixion, made Him our perfected leader. Jesus Christ experienced suffering not just in its many forms, but in all its essential forms. Thus He is the *fully equipped CAPTAIN* who can bring all the sons/daughters in God’s family through the tough stuff...to glory.

Bottom line – you have a CAPTAIN who never quit...and can keep you going.



To FINISH WELL..let's pay more attention to our GREAT SALVATION
 To FINISH WELL, let's realize what we have in OUR CAPTAIN

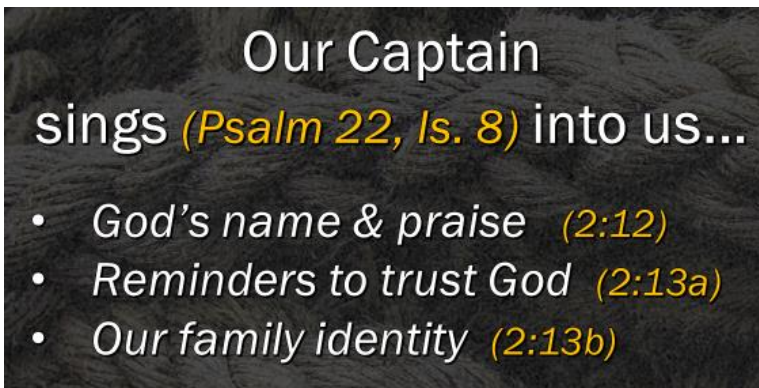
Third, to finish well, we must **REMAIN UNIFIED** with the **ONE** bringing us to glory.
Hebrews 2:11-13

Hebrews 2:11-13 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."

The key to these verses is the last part of verse 11. If I may, it should read something like this: *For He who sanctifies* (i.e., Jesus, our Captain), *and those who are sanctified* (i.e., us!) **are all of one.**"

Meaning, there is a powerful oneness between Jesus and those He is bringing to glory. I have a "oneness" with Him, and with other Christians (ah, a Cord of Three strands), that is powerful, that needs to be prized and celebrated and strengthened.

And will you notice **how our Captain strengthens our oneness** with Him and others. He...



There is NO ONE like God the Son, Jesus Christ. He is in charge of our GREAT SALVATION. He is FULLY EQUIPPED to be our Captain-Savior through the tough stuff. He deserves our decision to

STAY UNITED with Him. Though some do, there is no good reason to quit. There is every good reason – even through the tough stuff – to never give up.

CONCLUSION

If Jesus personally and bodily return sometime this week, we will be back in this book (Lord willing) next Sunday. But before then, may I ask you?

Have you thrown in the towel on your faith? If so, it is the very worst decision you could make in life. Climb back in the ring. Pick up the towel. Pay new attention to your Captain, and let Him begin singing again what you need to hear into the ears of your heart.

Perhaps you've never had a faith-and-following relationship with Jesus? At least three times in this letter (Hebrews) the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice...do not harden your hearts as the Israelites did in the rebellion..." (3:7,13,15, 4:7). There is a GREAT salvation God offers you; why not receive it?

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ⁱ What's the meaning of the phrase 'Throw in the towel'?

To throw in the towel (or, to throw the towel in) is to give up, to avoid further punishment when facing certain defeat.

ⁱⁱ What's the origin of the phrase 'Throw in the towel'?

This little expression of course derives from boxing. When a boxer is suffering a beating and his corner want to stop the fight they literally throw in the towel to indicate their conceding of the fight. This earliest citation that I have found of this is in the American newspaper *The Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*, January 1913:

Murphy went after him, landing right and left undefended face. The crowd importuned referee Griffin to stop the fight and a towel was thrown from Burns' corner as a token of defeat.

It was very soon after that that the phrase began to be used in a figurative sense, to indicate giving up in non-boxing contexts; for example, in the Australian author Clarence James Dennis's WWI patriotic novel, *The Moods of Ginger Mick*, 1916:

*No matter wot 'e done. It's jist a thing
I knoo 'e'd do if once 'e got the show.
An' it would never please 'im fer to sling
Tall tork at 'im jist cos 'e acted so.
"Don't make a song uv it!" I 'ear 'im growl,
"I've done me limit, an' tossed in the towl."*

Throwing in the towel was preceded by throwing in the sponge. Sponges were a common ringside accessory as early as the 18th century. Throwing in the sponge was then the preferred method of conceding defeat. This is recorded in the mid-19th century, in *The Slang Dictionary*, 1860:

'To throw up the sponge,' to submit, give over the struggle, - from the practice of throwing up the sponge used to cleanse the combatants' faces, at a prize-fight, as a signal that the 'mill' is concluded.

Curiously, throwing a hat into the ring has pretty much the opposite meaning to throwing in a towel - one means join a contest and the other means leave it. Despite the surface similarity, the two phrases are unconnected. <https://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/throw-in-the-towel.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.beliefnet.com/entertainment/celebrities/galleries/9-celebrities-that-went-against-their-christian-beliefs.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/michael-foust/christian-author-joshua-harris-of-i-kissed-dating-goodbye-announces-separation-from-his-wife.html> and <https://christiantoday.com/article/i-kissed-dating-goodbye-author-joshua-harris-now-says-he-is-no-longer-a-christian/132922.htm>

^{iv} <https://relevantmagazine.com/culture/hillsong-songwriter-marty-sampson-says-hes-losing-his-christian-faith/>

^v Neil. R. Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today: A Commentary on the Book of Hebrews* (Baker Book House, 1976), 76.