

“Curing Nothros Disease” ...or... “Scattered Sheep & the Seeking Shepherd”

Heb 6:11-20

November 12, 2023

Hebrews 6:11-20 *And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end,¹² so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,¹⁴ saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.”¹⁵ And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.¹⁶ For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath,¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

INTRO ...Introduction to “Nōthros”

“**Earnestness**” = spoudé, — 'haste,' takes on such meanings as 'work,' 'effort,' 'zeal,' 'seriousness,' 'readiness,' 'dedication.' ... spoudé has for Josephus the meaning 'concern,' 'attentiveness,' 'liking,' also 'involvement,' 'desire']

“**Sluggish**” = nōthros; i.e. lazy, dull, slothful] “That you might not be sluggish”

“**NOTHROS**” Happens!

- **The Hebrews ...**
- **The Story of the Ephesian Church**
- **The Story of the American Colonies**

“...the colonies did not exude universal piety. There was a general agreement that in the colonial period no more than 10-20 percent of the population actually belonged to a church.”
Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, “The Churching of America”, p. 29

- **The Story of the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution** (1700's - 1800's)
- **Our Day** (The Great Dechurching)

“We’re living amid the largest and fastest transformation of religion in American history, what Jim Davis and Michael Graham describe as the “Great Dechurching.” **Colin Hansen** (from Foreword of “The Great Dechurching”)

...**BE READY!!**

- **Be Humble!** ...Even the best of us have “off-days/seasons” in life—

“I’m thinking of a kind of temporal disorientation that is unrecognized because it’s buried and hidden by the illusion of being above the fray, immune to history, surfing time rather than being immersed and battered by its waves. ...“A lot of contemporary Christianity suffers from spiritual dyschronometria—an inability to keep time, a lack of awareness of what time it is.

What we need to counter spiritual dyschronometria and the fiction of nowhen Christianities is a renewed temporal awareness, a spiritual timekeeping that is attuned to the texture of history, the vicissitudes of life, and the tempo of the Spirit. ...Spiritual timekeeping is fundamentally a matter of awakening to our embeddedness in history and attending to our temporality—both individually and collectively.” **Smith, James K. A.** *How to Inhabit Time: Understanding the Past, Facing the Future, Living Faithfully Now* (p. 3, 8) Kindle

Curing “Nothros”

Ezekiel 34:11-13 *The Lord GOD Will Seek Them Out*

¹¹ “For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ¹² As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³ And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

— The “clouds and thick darkness” of our day

...Hebrews = the Shepherd’s Rescue of Scattered Sheep! ...The Inspired Word Comes After These “Nothros-Christians”!!

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“God wants you to have the full assurance of hope—no weak and flimsy hope, but a strong, full, confident hope—lest you become “sluggish” or “dull” and begin to think that the Christian hope is not as real as the hopes offered by the world. That’s the danger this book warns against over and over. Don’t be sluggish in the way you fight to keep your hope strong and vivid and compelling and alluring.” **John Piper**, “When Does God Swear”

Hebrews 6:11-20 *And we desire each one of you to **show the same earnestness** to have the full assurance of hope until the end,* ¹² *so that you may **not be sluggish**, but imitators of those who through **faith** and **patience** inherit the promises.*

¹³ *For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,* ¹⁴ *saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.”* ¹⁵ *And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.* ¹⁶ *For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.* ¹⁷ *So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath,* ¹⁸ *so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.* ¹⁹ *We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,* ²⁰ *where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.*

...Moving from Sluggishness to Earnestness features 3 things in this passage— (1) **Informing Our Patience**, (2) **Strengthening Our Faith**, (3) **Relocating Our Hope**

(1) “Informing Our PATIENCE”

...It is quite likely (As Modern Americans) that our expectations about “doing life” are more informed by Making Hershey’s Chocolate Milk ...than by Making Fine Wine! ...We can be expecting that Spirituality is a combination of my decision & instantaneous experiences!

“ENDURANCE” ...we started Hebrews by pondering Heb 12 as a focal point—

Heb 10:36 *For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.*

Heb 12:1-2 *...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus...*

“The church is a people of the future, a kingdom-come community that is always learning anew how to wait.” **James K.A. Smith**, “How to Inhabit Time”, p. 19

... You Will Live in Perpetual Conflict with Life—If You Have Erased the Concept of ENDURANCE from Your Life's Pursuits!

v. 12 ... *"imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises"* ...v. 15 *"Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise"* — Abraham waits 25 years before he sees the promise fulfilled! ...God could have shortened that!

... Endurance is NOT OPTIONAL

Jeremiah Lived in a Particular Time/Moment

Lamentations 3:16-18

¹⁶ *He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes;*

¹⁷ *my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is;*

¹⁸ *so I say, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD."*

NOTICE!! ...When You Run Out of Endurance in This Life—You Run Out of HOPE!!

Endurance is akin to the "Fermentation Process"—It is Necessary for Faith to Be What God has Ordained it to be!! ...There is Something VITAL going on during the "Endurance Process"

Rom 5:1-5 *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

1 Peter 1:3-9 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

? — What do I do with such a concept if I'm a Teenager or in my 20's or 30's? ...What Do I Do if I'm "Spiritually IMPATIENT!?"

— We are being "guarded by faith"—a Faith That Must Remain Vibrant & Strong All the Way to the End! (the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints) ...Thus God has Placed "Workout-Stations" along the Path of Our Journey—to Keep Faith Alive & Vibrant!! ...These "Workout-Stations" are "NECESSARY"—and they feel like various trials that test & grieve us!

"Endurance, Patience, and Waiting is NORMAL to Following Christ" (it always has been) ...

"God wants you to have the full assurance of hope—no weak and flimsy hope, but a strong, full, confident hope—lest you become "sluggish" or "dull" and begin to think that the Christian hope is not as real as the hopes offered by the world. That's the danger this book warns against over and over. Don't be sluggish in the way you fight to keep your hope strong and vivid and compelling and alluring." **John Piper**

...Why Are American Christians "DECHURCHING"?

But I take courage in THIS ...That the Heavenly Shepherd is Coming After His Scattered Sheep!
...This Passage Means THINGS CAN BE DIFFERENT FOR YOU!!