I. Announce:
   A. Slide#1 Baby Dedication 2nd: Matt & Jessica Laster.
      1. Levi James (3.5 yrs), Jesse Nicholas (2 yrs), Aaron Matthew Laster (7 wks).
   C. Slide#3 Interview: Fresonke’s.
      1. Slide#4,5 Mission Statement: Our mission at the Truth and Hope Foundation is to equip and train church leadership and laypersons in how to biblically disciple and counsel hurting individuals through TRUTH which leads to HOPE.
   D. Slide#6 blank Prayer: Haiti Team (HEF/CMCS H.S.) Peru Team (Tony).

II. Slide#7 Intro: Title: Falling into the Hands of the Living God
   A. God warns us so that we will not be presumptuous, but He comforts us so that we will not be discouraged.
      1. The hard heart needs the warning; the broken heart needs the comfort. (www)
   C. Is it ever right for God to raise His voice, yell, scream, & flail His arms at us? Absolutely!
      1. Just as a parent would, when seeing their toddler dart out into the street, where traffic is coming full speed. Pitch, tone, seriousness, everything changes...when it’s this serious. The small child MUST be warned to stay out of the deadly street.
      2. Hear the warning as the writer in Hebrews continues.

III. Slide#8 GOD’S PENSIVE FOREWARNING (26-31) [pensive - deep/serious]
   A. (26) This verse is the 2nd most controversial verse in all of Hebrews.
   B. The answer lies in the word willfully – It means, willingly, voluntarily, deliberately, intentionally.¹
      1. “It is directed to those who deliberately keep on sinning(NIV; ESV, NLT) after they fully understand the way of escape in Jesus.” Ray Stedman
         a) So 2 things: it’s deliberate & continual.
         b) Obviously then, one can’t stumble into this sin suddenly.
         c) “It is choosing to live for self behind a Christian veneer.” Ray Stedman, pg11.
      2. They had known the way of life…but had not chosen to avail themselves of it.

¹Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament, pg.703.
3. Slide#9 So, of course they are not going to find another way, nor another sacrifice.

C. (28) Deut.17:1-6 is spoken of here - If one who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, was taken to the gate of the city & stoned to death.

1. No mercy, no appeal, certain death. How much worse under the new cov. (vs.29)

D. (29) Trampled the Son of God under foot – This is similar what Jesus was getting to when he said, Do not...cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet. (or show disdain/grind him into the dirt). 3 definitions of sin...

1. Slide#10a Sin = trampling Christ underfoot - The awfulness of sin lay not in its breaking of the law but in its trampling of the love of Christ under foot.2
   a) It is not mere rebelliousness against the law; it is the wounding of love.

2. Slide#10b Sin = the failure to see the sacredness of sacred things - the writer says, look at the shed blood & the broken body of Christ. Look at what your new relationship to God cost? Can you treat it like it doesn’t matter?
   a) Sin is the failure to realize the sacredness of that sacrifice upon the cross.

3. Slide#10c Sin = the insult to the Holy Spirit - The H.S. tell us what is rt & wrong. Checks us when we’re on our way to sin. And stirs us when were drifting into lethargy.
   a) To disregard this voice is to...insult the Spirit & grieve the heart of God.

E. (31) Sometimes we as Christians are accused of using language too harsh, too alarming, too severe. Yet I believe there are no words in our English language by which we could actually exaggerate the awful condition of a soul, which has refused the gospel & awaits judgment.

1. Slide#11a This of course reminds us of the most famous sermon preached during the Great Awakening, & likely the most famous sermon in all American history, Jonathon Edwards, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, delivered in Enfield, Conn. in 1741

2. Slide#11b He used startling imagery I quote: “all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you, & keep you out of hell, than a spider’s web would have to stop a falling rock.” - “you hang by a slender thread, w/the flames of divine wrath flashing about it & ready every moment to singe it, & burn it asunder.” – “the bow of God’s wrath is bent, & the arrow made ready on the string; & justice directs the bow to your heart, & strains at the bow: & it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, & that of an angry God, w/o any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk w/your blood.”
   a) Slide#12 The stakes are just as high today...heaven or hell?
   b) As Kent Hughes said, “Jonathon Edwards gave his people a whiff of the sulphurs of hell that they might deeply inhale the fragrances of grace.”

3. Oh, so isn’t when it says, Jesus is trampled underfoot by man must be, God in the hands of angry sinners?

2 Adapted from William Barclay, Hebrews, pg. 125.
F. So this verse is a warning to the unbelievers: Let’s look at the passage that might have been on the writers mind that helped form the words he choose…but instead relates to the believer.

1. Slide#13 2 Sam.24:14 And David said to Gad, I am in great distress. *Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD*, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.

2. This is the golden hope of the believer, to fall repentantly into the hands of God. His hands are our hope.

3. [poem] The hands of Christ are very frail, For they were broken w/a nail.
   But only those reach heaven at last, Whom those frail, broken hands hold fast. K.Hughes

IV. Slide#14 GOD’S PAST FAITHFULNESS (32-34)

A. After the warning comes the comfort.

B. (32) Recall the former days - It was a challenge for them to remember how they had stood strong 15 years earlier during the persecution under the Roman Emperor Claudius (ad 49).

C. (32b) A great struggle with sufferings – [struggle = athlesis, our word athletic]

   1. The persecution was like a hard-fought athletic contest.

   2. Slide#15,16 Here’s a great example of this: Hugh Latimer (the English reformer) on one occasion preached before King Henry the VIII, & offended Henry in his boldness. Latimer was commanded to preach the following weekend & make an apology. On the following Sunday, after reading the text, he addressed himself as he began to preach: “Hugh Latimer, dost thou know before whom thou art this day to speak? To the high & mighty monarch, the king’s most excellent majesty, who can take away thy life if thou offendest; therefore, take heed that thou speakest not a word that may displease; but then consider well, Hugh, dost thou not know from whence thou comest; upon whose message thou art sent? Even by the great & mighty God! who is all-present, & who beholdeth all thy ways, & who is able to cast thy soul into hell! Therefore, take care that thou deliverest thy message faithfully.” He then gave Henry the same sermon he had preached the week before…only w/more energy!

D. Slide#17 (33a) You were made a spectacle - they were made public theatre [spectacle=theatrizo/theater]

E. (33b,34a) You became companions of those who were so treated - (NIV) You stood side by side with those who were so treated.

   1. If you insult them you insult me. It’s locking arms…facing this together.

F. You had compassion on me in my chains – In the 1st century prisoners had no means of survival apart from the visits of friends who brought food & water & clothing.

   1. Still this way in hospitals, jails & prisons in most all developing countries.

   2. Also, in the days of persecution that would place the visiting friends in grave danger because of associating w/the Christian.

G. How can we come alongside our brothers & sisters imprisoned or being persecuted today?...

   *Intercessory prayer for them:* Like highlighted in our Persecuted Church Keynote b4 service.
1. Slide#18 Following the secession of South Sudan in July 2011, Sudanese Christians have experienced escalating attacks resulting from a government policy to eradicate Christianity from the country. Since 2012, Sudan has expelled foreign Christians and bulldozed many church buildings on the pretext that church property belongs to investors. The most recent attack at the end of November included a wrecking crew (accompanied by police carrying weapons) to bulldoze the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church’s, Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church, along with some houses, including one belonging to Nile Theological College.

2. Police beat worshippers and arrested 38 for refusing to surrender the property, but the Christians resisted the attacks. "Boisterous young men" willing to die for their faith faced off with police, and church members formed a human shield to ward off additional demolition attempts. One of the arrested believers announced: "We have enjoyed worshipping and praising God in prison. The power of God was present among us."

H. (34b) Joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods - They could actually feel joy over watching their property confiscated, since they took comfort in the fact that their true treasures were in heaven, not on earth.

V. Slide#19 GOD’S PERMANENT FAITHFULNESS (35-39)

A. (35) Confidence - Remember vs.19 boldness/confidence (same word here). It’s God confidence.

B. (36) Endurance does not earn salvation, but rather it is the principle evidence of saving grace

1. Slide#20a Again quoting Bishop Hugh Latimer, A drop of rain made a hole in a stone, not by violence but by continually falling. So we need patience & perseverance.

C. Slide#20b (37) Patience - And so we await His 2nd coming.

D. (38) Continuance - This is quoted from Habakkuk 2:4 as an encouragement to Habakkuk to live by faith. Later he arose from his depression & was able to sing, Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls; Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Hab.3:17,18

1. William Jay This is a faith that is tired of being tossed back & forth idly moored at its dock This is a faith that isn’t afraid to leave the calm harbor. A faith that unfurls its sails & sets out to sea. A faith that isn’t afraid of encountering a healthy breeze. Sail away. Spread your sail toward the storm & trust in Him who rules the raging seas.  

a) “When I cannot feel the faith of assurance, I live by the fact of God’s faithfulness.” Mt Henry

E. (39) Perseverance - This verse helps us out with vs.26.
1. The 2 groups addressed throughout the letter are here placed in direct contrast:
   Some are drawing/shrinking back & are headed for destruction. Others continue to believe & thus experience the saving of their souls.

F. Slide #21 The just shall live by faith introduces us to our last section of Hebrews.
   1. Faith is the way we begin the life in Christ; Faith is also the way it is maintained; & Faith is what will bring us at last in triumph through the gates of glory.

G. Endurance, patience, continuance & perseverance are a daily struggle for the Christian.
   1. But often its ease that will ruin us & the struggles that actually toughened us.
   2. Slide #22 Hannibal of Carthage (247-183bc) generally considered one of the greatest military commanders in history was the general who had routed the Roman legions. But winter came and the campaign had to be suspended. Hannibal wintered his troops in Capua (N.of Naples) which he had captured, a city of luxury. And 1 winter in Capua did what the Roman Legions had not succeeded in doing. The luxury so sapped the morale of the Carthaginian troops that when the spring came & the campaign was resumed they were unable to stand before the Romans.
      a) Slide #23 Ease had ruined them when struggle had only toughened them.

H. This morning, through faith, fall into the hands & arms of the living & loving God...so you don't fall into the hands of the just & judging God.

I. Communion:
   1. Bread -
   2. Cup -