

Hebrews 10:32-39

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Preacher: Nathan Raynor

[0:00] Please take your copy of God's Word and join me in Hebrews chapter 10. Our study of Hebrews.

In our study of Hebrews so far, we have seen that the theme of Hebrews is the supremacy and finality of Jesus Christ. That is, Christ is greater than all in the world for our age.

In this letter, the author makes the case that Christ is greater than angels. Christ is greater than priests. That Levitical, Aaronic priesthood they were familiar with in their day.

And that Christ is greater than the old covenant redemptive economy. He has brought a new covenant. And it is a superior covenant.

And we have seen the theme that Christ is the final Word. We need no new revelation. God has revealed Himself fully in the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

[1:34] Now, the temptation that faced the believers, this letter was originally intended for, was the abandonment of their faith. And its author is concerned that they persevere to the end.

We have seen in chapter 6 that this beleaguered church had experienced apostasy in their ranks. They had experienced persecution.

And if the dating is correct, which I believe that it is on this letter, this has been going on now for some decade and a half. Many years of persecution.

And in this time, some who had once claimed faith in Jesus Christ had abandoned said faith. And so the author of Hebrews is seeking to press them on.

To encourage them to hang on and to hold up. To encourage them to do this even in the face of great adversity. And we decided to study this text because as followers of Christ, we will experience trials.

[2:41] And we must prepare ourselves to persevere. Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 12. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

And that persecution takes many shapes, right? In many places and across the ages. The truth is, if we are walking righteously in this world, the world will hate us as it hated Christ.

This is not the abnormal thing for the faithful follower of Jesus. This is the normal thing. Now, I am not an alarmist. But brothers and sisters, we need to be mindful of the day in which we live.

We need to be found persevering now. And we need to prepare ourselves to persevere to the end. Now, to be abundantly clear, we do not save ourselves by our perseverance.

But rather, because we have been saved, we persevere. It is of highest importance that we understand that God's loving kindness toward us in Jesus Christ.

[4:02] The salvation of our souls, right? Grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone is the cause. Perseverance is the effect.

Not the other way around. The author of Hebrews speaks to this once again in the last half of chapter 10. This is a repetitive theme throughout this book.

Last week, Clay preached on verses 26 through 31 of chapter 10, which contains within it the sternest warning against apostasy in this book.

It is a stark and trembly passage. Today, we're going to look at verses 32 through 39, which is this pastor's following encouragement.

In order to gain perspective and grasp the flow of the chapter, we're going to begin reading in verse 19 of chapter 10. Before I lead us in reading this together, we remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us.

[5:12] It was written for his glory and our good. And we would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and to obey its commands. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 19 and following.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has outraged the Spirit of grace.

[6:51] For we know him who said, Vengeance is mine, I will repay. And again the Lord will judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

I believe that Clay helped us to see that the person that our author is speaking of in verses 26 through 31 is the person who made a profession of faith in Jesus, but whose life was not altered. The effect was never shown, meaning the cause never happened. They showed themselves to not be regenerate, but apostate.

And that's something we need to hear in our day. In a day that being Christian means that grandma and grandpa are Christian.

They help put the parking lot in at the church building. In a day that being Christian means that I occasionally pop into church or that I vote Republican.

[7:57] We need to hear this. The cause produces something in us. There's an evidence of who we are in Christ.

A good tree bears good fruit. And if we find that our lives are only bearing bad fruit, then we must question the state of our souls.

So after this strong warning that the author of Hebrew gives, listen now to his pastoral kindness. Remember, this church is tired.

Any of you feel tired this morning? You feel like following Christ is exhausting? That we have picked up trouble in the world because we are faithful Christ followers?

Listen to the kindness of this pastor. But recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. Sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

[9:03] For you had compassion on those in prison and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised.

For yet a little while and the coming one will come and will not delay. But my righteous one shall live by faith. And if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. The author of Hebrews begins instructing his readers how to persevere in the present by reminding them how they persevered in the past.

He says to them, you will have the grace necessary to persevere now because look at the evidence that you have the grace necessary to persevere then. He exhorts them to recall the beginning of verse 32.

[10:20] But recall. He's making this case. We're not those people. We're not those who are going to abandon the faith even in the face of difficulty and struggle and persecution.

We're those who are going to persevere to the end. So he reminds them of something that happened in their lives. And this happens again and again and again in the Scripture.

We're over and over again instructed and commanded, exhorted, encouraged to remember. And this is massively important because we are such forgetful people.

Let me give you an example from the Old Testament. In Joshua chapter 3, we can read of Israel after sojourning in the wilderness for 40 years, crossing over the Jordan River.

If you're familiar with the story, you'll recall that the priests held the Ark of the Covenant and the waters split. Right? Just like they had happened so many years and to a generation that had passed previously.

[11:25] Once again, God works this miracle and they walk across on dry ground. They walk into the place, the land of Gilgal. And in that place, we can read Joshua chapter 4, verse 19 and following.

The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month and they camped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan as they were crossing it on dry ground, Joshua set up at Gilgal.

And he said to the people of Israel, when your children ask their fathers in times to come, what do these stones mean? This wouldn't have been twelve stones.

Significant. It pictured something. But they carried them. I can't imagine they were too large. There's a pile of twelve stones. This doesn't happen naturally.

So, in times to come, children are going to ask fathers, what do these stones mean? And here's the real significance of them. Verse 22, Then you shall let your children know.

[12:32] Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up for us until we passed over.

So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever. So they set up an altar of sorts, a memorial, that when they saw it, they would remember the mighty things God had done.

Not only had they passed over the Jordan into the promised land, but prior to that, they had passed out of slavery. It's meant to bring their minds back to the whole Exodus story.

And notice that the emphasis is on, Joshua says, what God has done. We're to be reminded about what God has done.

If you go on to read in the book of Joshua, Joshua many times retreats back to Gilgal. He goes back to this place to reunify forces as their conquest is going about in the promised land.

[13:46] He goes there to strategize. And I have to think, my theological imagination causes me to think that he was going back to a place that helped him remember the mighty hand of God.

What God had done and that he was sure to keep the promises he had made. There is great power in remembering who God is and what God has done.

Beloved, this book serves us so well in this way. We would take up these accounts and see who our Lord is. Remembering grants us the confidence we need to persevere.

So, our outline for today is simply this. Preserving in the past and preserving in the present. And I want to show you how the one serves the other according to the author of Hebrews.

So, let's look first persevering in the past. Verse 32 through 34. We see a picture of a strange group of people.

[14:59] I hope in some measure we identify with these people that we would say rejoice with them and say yes, amen to the way that they lived their lives. That wouldn't seem so far off and obscure that our lives would look something, some semblance of this.

He says, recall the former days when after you were enlightened. He's talking about them coming to faith in Christ. When the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached to them and embraced by them.

What happened? A hard struggle with sufferings. And the author of Hebrews uses the word endured. It doesn't seem that this was a brief and passing thing, but an ongoing thing. And history shows us that there was a great deal of persecution in Rome in their day. And he gives us some detail of that going on in verse 33.

Sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction and sometimes being partners with those so treated. So they were drug out into public places and mocked, ridiculed, and in some cases given physical injury.

[16:19] They were hurt as well. Beaten. Spat upon. Things thrown at them. And we find out in the next verse, verse 34, some of them were imprisoned.

So, these people had suffered and they had endured a hard struggle. How did they partner with those being treated?

They had compassion on them, those that were thrown in prison. In this day, if you didn't have family or friends that brought you provision in prison, you would die there.

Your jailers did not take care of your physical need. You relied on those outside to do so. And this precious little church bore one another's burdens, took up that task, and in doing so, they proclaimed themselves to be Christians.

They made it known to others, those in prison are church, they belong to Christ, and so do I. And what happened to them in their going to do this service to those is they had their property plundered.

[17:30] As they're going to serve their brothers and their sisters in prison, people came and stole their property, ransacked their homes.

And here's the peculiar thing about this people, they did it joyfully. They joyfully accepted the plundering of their property.

what an odd bunch. Why were they able to do this? How was it that they were able to endure hard struggle with sufferings, to be partnered with those that were enduring?

It's because they knew that they had a better possession and an abiding one. They knew that the things of this world are fleeting, falling away, someday turning to dust.

And they held loosely to those things in order that they might hold tightly to Christ. They knew that they had a better possession, Jesus himself, and an abiding one, the gift of the Spirit, the Spirit of Christ in them, one that could not be taken away.

[18:45] They understood that a student is not greater than his teacher. Christ suffered. Christ was persecuted.

Why would we ever think that we wouldn't receive the same thing at the hands of the world? Paul wrote in Colossians 1, verse 24, Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.

Now is Paul there suggesting that Jesus' suffering was not sufficient for the salvation of his church? Absolutely not. What does he mean by lacking in that text?

I think he means simply this. As we behold the suffering of Jesus Christ, this is part of our understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And this is part of the way that God carries the gospel of Jesus Christ into the world. Is that Christians also suffer as Christ suffered? We're a peculiar people.

[19:52] People say, who are these people that joyfully accept suffering and hardship? What is it about them that makes them so strange?

And we're to give them an answer. We have a better possession and an abiding one. We ought not think that we are greater than our master.

They understood that persecution identified them with Jesus Christ. In Acts chapter 5 and verse 41, we see the apostles before the Sanhedrin and they are beaten and charged to not speak anymore in the name of Christ.

Verse 41 says, then they left the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. They found great joy because this beating was evidence that they were rightly preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And praise God, they weren't silenced by their suffering. They went forth and boldly proclaimed the gospel. Beloved, we look at the text, and the text is primary, and it is of such great importance, but this is also why I like to bring church history into the life of our fellowship and how it helps to serve

us as we see generations of Christians who have walked faithfully and suffered for it.

[21:20] On your bulletin, there's a John Bunyan quote, and I tried to find the exact circumstance that he wrote this in response to, and I couldn't, but Bunyan was highly persecuted.

Bunyan wasn't given an approval of the state to preach, but he did anyway, and he was thrown in prison a number of times, and he would preach from inside the courtyard, and people would gather outside the prison walls, so he was thrown into a dark dungeon of the prison.

He suffered much, and he wrote this, Therefore, I bind these lies and slanderous accusations to my person as an ornament.

He decorated himself with them. It belongs to my Christian profession to be vilified, slandered, reproached, and reviled.

And since all this is nothing but that, as God and my conscience testify, I rejoice in being reproached for Christ's sake.

[22:23] He saw it as part of the uniform that you put on when you profess faith in Jesus Christ. Do we understand that? Do we count the cost of following Jesus?

Do we treasure Him in a way that nothing else matters in comparison? They understood that suffering was for their good.

God uses suffering as a kind Father to bring about maturity in our lives. James wrote in James 1, verse 2 and following, Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and that steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Do we take on suffering in that way? Do we view it as a great evil and a thing that just is unjust and should never happen? Or do we embrace it as part of God's sovereign plan for our good?

[23:31] They understood the concept of heavenly reward. They got, they have a better possession and an abiding one.

They embraced the teaching of Jesus. Matthew chapter 6 verse 19 and 20. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. They had actually experienced that. Thieves broke in and stole their earthly possessions. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Eternal heavenly reward. The things of this earth and our very lives themselves are fleeting. They are passing by and I know beloved that every day does not feel that way.

Some days feel like an eternity. Press on as we suffer and it just seems like it will never end.

[24:34] One glorious day we're going to put back on this life and go truly it was a hand breath. Truly I was a vapor in the wind. Why did I not heed this caution and this teaching?

We should have our minds aimed eternally. The rest of that expanse, that massive amount of time cannot be measured because it has no measure.

They understood but do we that we should be investing there and not here? How much of our lives are aimed at our comfort and our leisure our temporal enjoyment and how little of our lives are aimed like that?

These Christians were faithful in this way. I hope that we have been too. I could think of some examples of how we have been as well.

How would we endure a hard struggle with sufferings? I hope we would bear up by the grace of God in the same way. These were Christians that had been beaten down.

[25:45] This is why this letter is being written to them. It's trying to give them courage to press on. To persevere in the present.

So he goes on in verse 35 and on through the end of our text in verse 39. Because of this past persevering and persevere in the present.

He says in verse 35, therefore do not throw away your confidence which has a great reward. Now as I said earlier their confidence is not found in the activity of enduring hard struggles with sufferings.

Look at us. We're endures. Right? We're fantastic faithful Christians. Surely we can press on. And for them to look and see the great work that God had done in their lives.

The affection that God had given them for Christ. That they would treasure Christ as a greater possession and an abiding one as a gift of the Spirit. That they would joyfully accept the plundering of their property as a gift of the Spirit.

[26:59] That they would want to join in and partner that confidence that the author is referring to.

This confidence in their confession of Jesus as the Christ and the evidence that they truly believe that. The way that he's working in and through them.

Cause and effect. Remember the effect so that you'll remember the cause. You have need of this. Do not throw away your confidence because it has a great reward.

Another example from church history. Hugh Latimer who's one of the Oxford martyrs if you'd like to look those guys up at some point. He once was invited to preach before King Henry VIII and in his sermon he so offended King Henry that he was ordered to preach again the following Sunday and to supply an apology as part of that sermon.

Can you imagine what that must have felt like? He so boldly proclaimed the gospel that the king was offended and the king said you'll come back and you'll apologize.

[28:14] What a week that would have been. And Hugh Latimer in the beginning of this like the introduction to his sermon out loud in front of the king addresses himself.

He speaks to himself and this is that and it's got words in it that we don't usually use. So hang with me as he does this. He's speaking to himself out loud in front of the king in his court.

He said Hugh Latimer does thou know before whom thou art this day to speak to the high and mighty monarch the king's most excellent majesty who can take away thy life if thou offendest therefore take heed that thou speak is not a word that may displease!

message thou art sent even by the great and mighty God who is all present and who beholdeth all thy ways and who was able to cast thy soul into hell therefore take care that thou deliverest thy message faithfully he said to himself at this dialogue in front of the king that he feared God more than the king and then he proceeded to preach the exact same sermon he had preached the week before and the historians say but with much more energy and I don't know that King Henry VIII became a believer but it was received favorably he had a council with him and he applauded him for his boldness to preach in such a way before the king later as I mentioned Hugh Latimer was one of the Oxford martyrs he was martyred not by

King Henry VIII but by Queen Mary who we know as Bloody Mary who wreaked havoc against the Protestant church and he was ordered to be!

[30:14] at the stake and he is quoted as having said to Ridley play the man Master Ridley we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out do and the Oxford martyrs these men in addition to Ridley and Latimer Cranmer Thomas Cranmer were burned in this place there's a monument to them there now but was the very beginning of the English Reformation and certainly by God's grace that is a candle that has not been put out do not throw away your confidence which has such a great reward verse 36 he goes on for you have need of endurance so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised this idea of endurance could be thought of as perseverance or steadfastness

God is steadfast toward us and we in return by his grace are meant to be steadfast toward him the Christian life is more of a marathon than a sprint we are meant to put our head down and run many of us have probably seen some sporting event where somebody just goes too hard at the beginning they just press and press and press so hard and they run out of steam we are not meant to be those people we are meant to!

the Puritans often called this plotting this is not a word we use anymore either right but getting on the road on the way of Jesus and just taking the next step and the next step and the next step and it feels like plotting so often it's rare I find in my life that I feel like skipping down this road right it feels like trudging along but by the great grace that God provides we will plod to the end after our text today I'm going to be into Hebrews chapter 11 which is a list of people and their steadfast faith we're going to consider for a long time faithfulness and what it looks like and just after chapter 11 the author of Hebrew writes therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses all

of these faithful people who have gone before us let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us he means to pick up this type of imagery as he talks back in chapter 10 about our need of endurance that we would keep up our stamina and press on to the end the author then cites once again the

Old Testament book is just packed full of the Old Testament let's not divorce our faith from it this time Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 3 and 4 the book of Habakkuk Habakkuk writes for still I'm sorry God speaks to Habakkuk in this text for still the vision awaits its appointed time it hastens to the end I will not lie if it seems slow wait for it it will surely come it will not delay behold his soul is puffed up it is not upright within him but the righteous shall live by faith this is the text that Paul is citing in Romans chapter 1 and verse 17 the righteous shall live by faith this was an exhortation originally given by God to Habakkuk as Habakkuk complained about the advances of injustice and the suffering of

God's people Habakkuk in the beginning of this book is crying out why oh Lord how long oh Lord and this is the exhortation that's given to him in response the end is coming don't shrink back press on in faith and it's his meditation on this truth that leads him to pin the great song of faith in Habakkuk chapter 3 verse 17 and 18 and 19 which is what was read previously by Clay this morning let me just reread once again verse 17 and 18 though the fig tree should not blossom nor fruit beyond the vines the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food the flock be cut off from cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stall nothing is going our way even though nothing is going our way Habakkuk says yet I will rejoice in the

[35:40] Lord I will take joy in the God this is the text Habakkuk 2 3 4 this exhortation of God that the author of Hebrews cites here now he is citing the rearranged Septuagint version of Habakkuk 2 3 4 which is the Greek translation and our New Testament authors were given the latitude to do that by the Spirit you'll find that inconsistency sometimes but by the Spirit we have this now Greek version of Habakkuk 2 3 and 4 the order is a little bit different than it is in the Hebrew but all the same we can see through our New Testament understanding three things number one Jesus is returning soon he will return he will not delay look verse 37 yet a little while and the coming one will come and will not delay this may feel like a long time to us

I hope your heart with me could say come Lord Jesus today is a great day Lord come back today but in due time in God's sovereign purpose he will not delay Jesus is returning soon number two the believer the true follower of Jesus Christ will persevere either to the end of their life or to the return of Christ they will persevere they will stay steady following Jesus and number three the unbeliever will not persevere verse 38 but my righteous one shall live by faith and if he shrinks back my soul has no pleasure in him faith here could also be rendered faithfulness so my righteous one shall live by faithfulness the evidencing of who they are in

Christ they stay steady they press on they pursue beloved if you are in Christ you will be picking up the graces of God to you meeting with the church scripture reading and obedience prayer and you will be pressing on in holiness you won't be like a man who looks in the mirror and turns away and forgets his face you will be like a man who rather looks in the mirror picks up this text sees who you are in Christ and responds faithfully to who you are in Jesus the believer will persevere in faithfulness steadfastness fidelity the unbeliever will not the unbeliever will shrink back when things get tough they will pull away and Jesus parable of the sower this is that rocky soil the one who appears to spring forth life but when the son of tribulation comes out because there is no root in him he dries up and withers away!

And finally verse 39 the author says and I hope this is an encouragement to you but we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed this is not us wrote earlier in Hebrews chapter 6 that he is sure of better things things that belong to God he himself is looking from the outside at this tired church and saying I'm seeing the evidences of God's grace in your life hey remember when you endured a hard struggle with sufferings remember the love that you had for one another remember those days when you weren't neglecting to meet together remember those days when you did in fact draw near remember that we're not those who shrink back we're those who press on we're those who have faith and preserve our souls I hope that this is true of you this morning we must never grow tired in our preaching of the gospel of Jesus

Christ of saying to people make your calling and election sure be sure in the age in which we live having said yeah I believe in Jesus that your life evidences that that it's not just merely a mental assent an acceptance of something handed down to you through some generations the cultural thing you think you should do but rather that you have actually beheld Jesus Christ as precious you've understood that he is God incarnate God himself humbled himself to become a man massive!

[40:47] significance and not only that to come and to die on a cross to bear the wrath of God for your sin it was yours and he took it from you and by faith in him he gives you his perfect life God would behold us in Jesus and say of us beloved you're mine you belong to me you're now my sons and daughters and I am your father because of what Jesus did for us because of anything that we've done and that this realization would be a thing that motivates in you change life a life lived now in worship of God in every area we give ourselves away for the sake of knowing Jesus we're those who lose our lives in order that we might gain them we're those who pick up our cross daily having counted the cost knowing full well what comes our way being followers of Jesus for to be disciples of Christ we should expect the life that Christ had and it's going to weigh out in different measure I'm married and I have children Jesus didn't I'm to give myself away to the will of God in this world for the glory of God the way that Jesus did we should expect struggling hard struggles with sufferings will come our way are we those who shrink back and are destroyed are we those who have faith and preserve our souls let's pray together