

Remember and Respond

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 April 2025

Preacher: Matt Hunt

[0 : 0 0] Hebrews chapter 10, reading from verse 32 through to 39, which is the end of the chapter. 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.

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 a 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. Thanks, Alex.

[1 : 1 7] Let's pray. Lord, as we consider this passage in Hebrews, help us to hear what you want to say to us through your word.

Help us to see more of Christ, more of your faithfulness, and help us to respond in faith. Amen. Well, in the 1930s, the Golden Gate Bridge was one of the most ambitious construction projects that the world had ever seen.

The idea of building a massive steel bridge across the deep waters of the San Francisco Bay seemed almost impossible. And it was dangerous.

The winds howled, the scaffolding would sway high above the freezing waters. Because many men were terrified. Before that time, it was just accepted that for every \$1 million spent on a bridge construction, one life would be lost.

Death was part of the job. But the chief engineer, Joseph Strauss, he cared deeply for the men that were risking their lives to build the bridge. And he insisted on a new idea that no one had ever used before on that scale.

[2 : 3 1] And that was a giant safety net. Stretching underneath the entire span of the bridge as it was being built. It cost a mozza as well. It was about \$130,000.

An enormous amount during the Great Depression. But Strauss made it clear if there was no net, there'd be no bridge. At first, the workers were sceptical.

Some joked about the net. Some said it wouldn't matter. Some were still frozen in fear as they climbed the beams and the cables hundreds of feet above the water. And some did slip.

And the net caught them. And they survived. But one thing was true. The men no longer based their confidence on how strong they felt on any given day.

They didn't base their confidence on how well rested they were or how many Weet-Bix they had for breakfast. Or how steady their hands were. Their confidence rested on something beneath them.

- [3 : 31] Something that was strong enough to hold them if they fell. And this is the kind of confidence that our passage today is calling us to. Hebrews 10, 32-39.
- It's not a call to be brave by sheer willpower. It's not a pep talk about toughening up. It's a call to remember and respond.
- Remember, God has proven his faithfulness in the person and work of Christ. Remember how God has helped you endure struggles, suffering, loss. And you can have confidence.
- Not in how unshakable you are. But confidence in the finished work of Christ. The solid, unbreakable foundation beneath us.
- Some call Hebrews chapter 10 the great pivot point in the book of Hebrews. Where it moves from explanation to application. And the author's gone to great detail to explain the superiority of the person and work of Christ.
- [4 : 32] And he goes on to describe that because of who Christ is and what he did for us on the cross. We can now have full confidence in our divine and permanent access to God through Christ.
- Not only this, but we can also have full confidence in Jesus, our advocate. There's no longer a need for a high priest to offer sacrifices on our behalf for sin. As we saw in the Old Testament.
- Christ became the ultimate sacrifice. Once and for all, through his death on the cross. And Jesus continues to be our advocate. And he prays to God on our behalf.
- Two weeks ago, Martin encouraged us from Hebrews 10, 19 to 31. Which says that because of our full access to God through Christ our advocate. We should draw near, hold fast and look outwards as we consider how we spur each other on.
- And then the writer gives us one of the most sobering warnings found in all of scripture. About the folly of rejecting the sacrifice of Christ. Through unrepentant and deliberate ongoing sin.
- [5 : 42] And he concludes in verse 31 with, It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And parents and children among us may be familiar with what comes next.
- After you've sat your child down. And delivered some much needed words of discipline. Next comes a hug. It's the reassurance that you love them.
- Two weeks ago, Martin gave us the words of discipline. And now through a fortunate coincidence, I get to give us the hug that comes next. But we're going to see that both warning and hug are necessary.
- And that brings us to today's passage. So the writer begins to apply what access and advocacy means for a small church. That's face to face with the great threat of being tossed around by the storms of the world.
- In chapter 10, verses 32 to 39. We're going to be encouraged to remember the past. Respond in the present. Remember the past. Respond in the present.
- [6 : 44] Let's jump in. Have a look at verse 32. Recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. We don't know exactly what events the writer was referring to here.
- Although some say it was referring to converted Jewish Christians being banished from the synagogue and abused and publicly humiliated by the Jewish establishment in AD 49 at the instruction of the Roman Emperor Claudius.
- But whatever they'd been through, it's clear that it involved intense persecution, which was likened to being squeezed and pressured for their faith in Christ. Last week, Dave told us about a Dutch Christian watchmaker, Corrie ten Boom.

Just a quick refresher if you weren't here for the Easter service. After being set free because of a clerical error from a World War II Nazi concentration camp, just days before all the women her age were executed, Dave told us how Corrie was eventually able to meet and forgive one of the guards who had tormented her and her sister Betsy.

Corrie and her sister were exposed to freezing cold conditions, starvation, lice-infested bedding, constant cruelty from the prison guards.

[8 : 03] But Corrie knew that she had been freely forgiven. She knew how much she'd been freely forgiven in Christ. And she had the same compassion that Christ showed her, which overflowed into compassion for the guard.

She was able to forgive one of the very people who had caused her and her sister such immense suffering. While they were prisoners, Corrie managed to smuggle a Bible into the camp and they would hold secret worship services where they would read scripture and sing hymns under their breath.

And Corrie's sister Betsy ended up dying in the camp before Corrie was released. As she grew weaker and before she was passing away, Betsy would whisper, there is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still.

Even through some of our deepest sufferings, Christ proved himself faithful. Even through some of their deepest sufferings, Christ proved himself faithful to sustain them and give them joy in Christ.

Corrie reflected on her time in the concentration camp with the words, when Jesus is all you have, you realise he's all you need. The kind of suffering that Corrie ten Boom and her sister experienced can feel pretty distant from us in 2025.

[9 : 29] But it may not have felt so distant from the reality of what these first century Christians endured. Look at verse 33. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution.

I won't pretend to know Greek, but I'm told that the Greek word for publicly exposed comes from the word theatron or theatre. They were taunted and ridiculed.

They were forced to face the humiliation of being put on display like they were public theatre. Not only did they endure, but the verse 34 says, they joyfully accepted the plundering of their property since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession, an abiding one.

I was recently surprised by a statistic by the State Emergency Service that only 36% of Lismore residents surveyed would be likely to evacuate their home in a flood, during a flood, if asked directly to do so by authorities.

Only 36% would evacuate during a flood. Why is that? I think this speaks of our strong human tendency to hold on as hard as we can to what we have, especially in tough times.

[10 : 48] And can you imagine watching on with joy while your house was being robbed? Why would anyone do that? How could anyone be joyful in these circumstances?

Because Christ was at work in them. And because of this, they knew they had a better possession, an abiding possession. They believed and they trusted in the words of Jesus from Matthew 6, 19 that says, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.

The gospel had flipped their priorities for what is important upside down. They were seeking not the temporary, but the city that is to come, the heavenly Jerusalem. So why would the author be calling on them to remember these times?

Because these times were evidence of the work that God had already done in them. And God hadn't changed. He was going to continue to sustain and anchor them through suffering and through the struggle that was to come.

By looking back, they're encouraged that even if they lose earthly possessions again, even if they're exposed to insult and persecution and made to be humiliating public theatre, they have something that's so much better, something that can never be taken away.

[12 : 11] They have an abiding possession, the finished work of Christ giving us salvation, full access to God, full advocacy in Christ.

Have a look at verse 33, the second half. Sometimes you were partners with those so treated. You had compassion on those in prison. One of the ways that God helped his people to endure the storm was through other believers.

They were active in each other's suffering. Side by side, arms locked, they faced persecution together. If you insult him, you insult me. The gospel not only restores our vertical relationship with God, but it changes our horizontal relationships with each other.

The gospel lifts our gaze upwards to Christ and his finished work and then outwards to have compassion for each other. We're saved into a people, into a church, the body of Christ.

And if there's one guarantee in this life, it's that at some point we all suffer. We all experience suffering. And I have no doubt that there's people in our congregation who have walked through some times of deep sorrow, deep suffering that I couldn't begin to fathom.

[13 : 25] And it's interesting that the same word for compassion that the believers in Hebrews had for each other's suffering in verse 34 is used earlier in chapter 4 to describe Christ's sympathy for us as our high priest.

It's Christ's compassion and sympathy for us that model and motivate our compassion and sympathy for each other. What a beautiful thing it is to be saved into the body of Christ that has the same compassion and sympathy for each other that Christ has for us.

And we were reminded in Dave's talk on Hebrews 6 verse 10 that God loves it when we show compassion to each other. For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you've shown for his name in serving the saints as you still do.

And Martin encouraged us in his sermon on Hebrews 10 just before Easter not to give up meeting together. We're not meant to walk alone as Christians. A pastor in response to the question can you still be a Christian and not go to church once said of course in the same way that you can still be married and never come home.

You might still be married but you're missing a whole lot and it's not the way that it's created to be. It's incredibly hard to endure suffering without the support of other Christians.

[14 : 52] We need each other. And so the writer of Hebrews is urging them remember here is the evidence of what God has already done in you. Remember that God was at work in you through suffering bringing endurance joy deep compassion for each other.

And then we come to the big therefore of verse 35. After remembering the past what are we to do next? Verse 35 to 39 the author gives us a couple of ways that we can respond in the present.

Number one in perseverance and number two in confidence through faith in the finished work of Christ. Verse 36 For you have need of endurance so that when you've done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

If you ever watched a long distance running race or a park run or maybe a school cross country there's a few people that at the start of the race it looks like they've got jet packs on their sneakers and they'll just take off.

But then you watch them and about halfway into the race or maybe a couple of kilometres depending on the race they run out of steam. They tank out. And then you watch the more sustainably paced plotters overtake them.

[16:11] Perseverance is key. And our text recommends a perseverance that keeps going to the end. A call to not give up our confidence in Christ.

And this perseverance assures us of what is promised being full salvation in Christ. Perseverance doesn't earn our salvation but it's primary evidence of salvation.

Perseverance doesn't earn our salvation it is primary evidence of our salvation. Verse 35 Do not throw away your confidence which has great reward.

I think arrogance and pride are sometimes words that can be associated with confidence but these are so far from what the writer is describing in verse 35 because our confidence as Christians doesn't rest on our own abilities or our capacity.

It doesn't rest on how loud or how well we sing. It doesn't rest on how well we play an instrument on the music team. It doesn't rest on how many rosters we're on or how many sermons we can preach or how many services we lead or how busy we are or how busy we look or how we feel compared to other Christians.

[17:27] Our confidence as Christians rests wholly and solely on the person and the work of Christ. Verse 37 to 39 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 are of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

The author's quoting from Habakkuk chapter 2 verses 3 to 4 and it's worth reading at least the first 4 or 5 chapters of Habakkuk to get a full context for these verses but in summary the prophet Habakkuk repeatedly cried out to God complaining about the injustice and the suffering of the righteous and have a look at God's response to Habakkuk.

The righteous shall live by faith. Live by faith Habakkuk. The key to perseverance for Habakkuk was faith but what is God telling Habakkuk to have faith in?

He's telling him to have faith in who God is who he has proven himself to be and the writer of Hebrews is encouraging the reader to do the same as Habakkuk.

Later on in Habakkuk chapter 3 after God's words to him have sunk in he sings a beautiful and well-known song of faith to God. Though the fig tree should not blossom nor fruit be on the vines the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls yet I will rejoice in the Lord I will take joy in the God of my salvation God the Lord is my strength he makes my feet like the deers he makes me tread on high places.

[19:27] The key to perseverance for Habakkuk and the key to perseverance for the Hebrews and the key to perseverance for us is faith. It's not faith in how strong or brave we feel on any given day or faith in our inability it's faith in the net underneath us it's certainty that the net will save us from an otherwise certain death in the event of a strong gust of wind or a misplaced step.

Faith in the net gives us confidence to carry on. The finished work of Christ is our confidence. So to summarise verses 37 to 39 Jesus is coming soon.

A reminder that our current struggle and suffering is temporary compared to an eternity with Christ. the saved will persevere by faith and the lost will shrink back.

So have confidence in Christ through faith to persevere. Saint Chrysostom showed an incredible display of faith and confidence in Christ when he was brought before the Roman Emperor and the Emperor threatened him with banishment if he remained a Christian and Chrysostom replied you cannot banish me for this world is my father's house but I will slay you said the Emperor no you cannot said the noble champion of the faith for my life is hid with Christ in God I'll take away your treasures no you cannot for my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there but I will drive you away from man and you shall have no friend left no you cannot for I have a friend in heaven from who you cannot separate me

I defy you for there is nothing you can do to hurt me think back to the young and the small storm-toss church that's just come out of an intense period of persecution knowing that more persecution was coming more persecution was on the horizon there was a reason why God told the Israelites to gather the stones of remembrance at Gilgal after God had helped them cross the Jordan into the promised land and although the stones were much less impressive than the miraculous display that God showed them of his power it was a symbol of God's faithfulness that he will preserve and carry his people tough times are still ahead look at these stones remember how I helped you and respond in faith the author of Hebrews encourages us with two things remember how God has shown his faithfulness and helped you in the past and respond in the present be confident in

[22 : 37] Christ's finished work be confident that Christ is at work in you look back in faith look ahead but keep going persevere in faith the fickle and the fleeting are not worth your worry and attention God says my righteous one shall live by faith George Matheson wrote the hymn oh love that will not let me go in the midst of his own suffering that was a result of him losing his sight to a degenerative eye condition and there's much more to the story and it's worth looking up but here are some verses from his famous hymn to encourage us oh joy that seekest me through pain I cannot close my heart to thee I trace the rainbow through the rain and feel the promises not in vain that mourn shall tearless be oh cross that liftest up my head

I dare not ask to fly from thee I lay in dust life's glory dead and from the ground their blossoms red life that shall endless be oh love that will not let me go I rest my weary soul in thee I give thee back the life I owe that in thine ocean depths its flow may richer fuller be Lord help us be assured by and rest in the finished work of Christ help us remember your faithfulness to work in us and help us endure through suffering and loss give us confidence in Christ faith to persevere and compassion for each other Amen