

Untitled (60)

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[0:00] But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

! In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.! Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.

That we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior, Jesus Christ. Who lives and reigns with you in the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

May that be our own prayer, as we open up God's Word together this morning. So we're back in the book of Hebrews this morning, which in my book is always a great thing.

Love Hebrews. Glad to be there. Before we dive in, though, I would like for all of us to consider something. I want each of us to think about the witness of those who have gone before us in the faith.

[1:33] Both those that we've known personally, and those in the past, or sometimes even in the distant past. But all of those who have departed this life in the hope of the resurrection.

Let's have those people on our minds. Now while we're thinking about that, I'd like to point out why it was that I chose Rock of Ages as one of the hymns from my installation on Friday.

For one, it's a really awesome hymn. It just objectively is. But there's also another reason that's more personal. It was the favorite hymn of my grandfather, who departed to be with the Lord a few years ago.

Just wanted to take time, as I'm preparing and entering into this new ministry, to remember his witness. And I chose it for that reason. Now he was one who died in faith and hope.

One who, as his earthly life came to a close, said that he was looking forward to going to be with Jesus. I think that all of us, right, have known people who are like that.

[2:40] Families, friends, loved ones. Want us to have those people in our minds this morning. The memory of those dear people who loved the Lord.

So this week we're in Hebrews 10. Now last week in Hebrews, we talked about the difference between the priests of the Old Covenant and Jesus Christ, the one high priest of the New Covenant, and how he's a better high priest.

This morning's passage also sets the difference between two things before us. But it's a different kind of focus this time. Now we're looking at the difference between those who shrink back from their profession of faith, right?

Those who start the race and don't finish it. And those who are preserved in faith to the end. Those who don't turn away from their faith in the Lord Jesus.

With that difference in mind, let's jump into Hebrews 10, beginning at verse 31. As our passage has been divided up for us for this morning, the first thing we see in verse 31 is a really stark warning that should give us pause.

[3:56] It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. That is not a verse we're likely to send to someone on a Hallmark card.

Probably not making it onto inspirational calendars, right? But, it's in the scriptures because we need that reminder.

Outside of faith in Jesus, the hands of the living God is a dangerous and fearful place to be.

And that's where those who shrink back find themselves. Now, if our passage ended there, we would find ourselves in a lot of fear without much comfort.

But, thank God that it doesn't. Going on, we start to see the difference, right? Between those who shrink back and those who don't. Now, those who shrink back are destroyed.

[5:06] We're reminded here. That is a fearful message. But, we're also reminded, brothers and sisters, that we are not like those who shrink back.

Those who don't shrink back. Persevere through struggles. Through persecution and through sufferance. The hearers that the author of Hebrews is addressing.

Have stayed faithful to Jesus. Through all these things. As verse 32 and 33 put it. It says, Now, it should be said at this point that many of us, and I include myself in this number, have not endured the kind of persecution that the early church endured.

Or the kind of persecution that our brothers and sisters around the world are enduring. Even now, as some of them are violently murdered with the name of Jesus on their lips.

Many of us haven't been there. But, none of us can completely escape the attacks of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

[6:37] In this world, each of us will have to endure some kind of hard struggle with sufferings. Each of us will have to endure some kind of temptation.

Some shrink back from the pressure of these attacks. But some keep going and endure to the end in faith.

So how, we must ask, are we to be those who endure? And I think that our passage for this morning really gives us a couple of markers.

A couple identifiers, if you will. For those who don't shrink back. Let's take a look at those. We see the first of those in verse 34. It says, Now the last portion of this verse, I think, is totally key.

Those who kept going knew that they had a better possession and an abiding one. A better possession that can't be plundered.

[7:59] A better possession that can't be taken away. A better hope that no one, that nothing in this life can take from us.

And didn't Jesus talk about this better hope? He did. What did Jesus say? Well, listen with me to the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 13, verse 44.

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Now why would the man who found the kingdom of heaven sell all that he has for the sake of that treasure? He would sell everything because it is a treasure that is so much more precious than anything else that he has.

He would sell everything for the sake of the kingdom of heaven because he knows that no eye has seen nor ear heard nor the heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.

[9:21] And he knows that unlike worldly treasure, the treasure of knowing Jesus, the treasure of the kingdom, can't be taken from him. As Jesus says in Matthew 6, 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, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Thieves cannot break in and steal this treasure. Moth and rust can't destroy this treasure. Our heavenly hope in Jesus is so much more than any worldly hope.

And that's what keeps us going. So those who endure in faith keep going because they know that it will be worth it.

So they press on no matter what. And we see the next marker of those who press on in verses 35 and 36. It says, 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.

[10:54] Those who don't shrink back have endurance rooted in confidence. And where is our confidence found? Is our confidence in anything other than faith in Jesus where we find the power and the promises of God?

We already saw last week that our confidence isn't in the blood of bulls and goats, right? And our confidence cannot be in our own strength and our own power. Otherwise, maybe the blood of bulls and goats might have been good enough to save us.

Our confidence is in this power of the shed blood of Jesus. Our confidence is in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit that draws us near to Jesus, gives us growth in holiness, and gives us the strength to press on.

Our confidence is in what God has done and what God is doing. Relying on our own strength, relying on anything other than what God has done in Jesus is going to tire us out. It's going to disappoint us. And we are not going to have confidence in endurance. But looking to Jesus, we see what God has done for us.

[12 : 23] We see what God is going to do for us. We see what the power of God is going to accomplish in us.

And that reminder carries us through even when we're discouraged. Now the theologian and reformer Martin Luther put it really well, I think, when he said this, When the devil throws our sins up to us and declares that we deserve death and hell, we ought to speak this.

I admit that I deserve death and hell. What of it? Does this mean that I shall be sentenced to eternal damnation? By no means.

For I know one who suffered and made satisfaction in my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And where he is, there shall I be also.

So the second marker of those who endure is this confidence. The confidence that where Jesus is, we will be because of what Jesus has done.

[13 : 39] Doesn't that give us every hope that we need to keep going? Really does. Really does. So those who endure, those who don't shrink back, are characterized by treasuring Jesus.

By treasuring what God has planned for us. And by having confidence in the power and the promise of God. And we don't just see this combination, right, in Hebrews 10.

We don't just even see it just in the New Testament. Listen with me to what Psalm 73, verses 25 and 26 have to say. The psalmist writes, Whom have I in heaven but you?

And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail. But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

And the psalmist's prayer is our prayer, isn't it? The psalmist's hope is our hope, right? The psalmist's confidence is our confidence, isn't it?

[14 : 55] And so we say, God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. So think again of those we've known who have kept their faith in Jesus to the very end.

Think about them. Isn't this what drove them? This unshakable conviction that Jesus Christ as their treasure is so much greater than what this world has to offer.

This total reliance on God as the strength of their hearts. Isn't it so? And isn't that what we want to drive us as those who don't shrink back?

I think it is. Now one of the church's great saints, a young woman who died early in life of tuberculosis, but who died in the hope of the resurrection, echoed the psalmist's prayer, and echoed what we find in Hebrews 10 this morning so beautifully.

She put it like this, In the evening of this life I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is blemished in your eyes.

[16 : 19] I wish then to be clothed in your own justice and to receive from your love the eternal possession of yourself. It's clear from this prayer that Jesus was her treasure.

He was that which she desired above all else. And it's also clear that her confidence was in Jesus alone, in His blood, in His merits, in His righteousness.

Have you known people like that? who remained that way in sickness or in health, in life or in death? I've known people like that.

I'm guessing you probably have too. Let's follow their witness. Let's imitate their faith. because we like them are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forever.

[17 : 45] Amen.