

The Glorious Son: Perseverance

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[0 : 00] Hebrews is a really difficult book and it has a lot, it's one of those books of the Bible that you come to and you start to read it and it actually has a lot of assumed knowledge which lies behind it.

So it's written to an audience which has been raised under the law of Moses and its regulations, culturally raised as Jews. So the law defined their life, they circumcised their boys, they lived under the Ten Commandments, they knew that God called them to love their neighbours as themselves, they didn't eat things like prawn cutlets and pork buns.

Who had pork buns after church last Sunday night? Yeah, one or two. So they couldn't have lived in Chatswood. They didn't work on Saturdays, they didn't wear nylon or lycra because that was their culture, that was how God taught them to live their lives as his holy, as his different, as his set apart people.

And that's not where most of us come from. I know that in our group some people have found Hebrews tedious and a struggle, certainly not the Wednesday nighters because you've been doing Tulip with John Piper, but in the group, some of the groups have been finding it hard, others of the groups have been rejoicing it and I've been rejoicing it for myself as well.

But Hebrews is of high value because it forces us to see how Christ fulfils all that the Old Testament doesn't. So Hebrews paints a picture, a startling picture of how Christ fulfils the Old Testament and doesn't abolish it.

[1 : 33] So if you remember the words of Jesus, do not think that I came to abolish the law and the prophets, I have come to fulfil them, he said in the Sermon on the Mount. So this passage which I'm preaching tonight begins with these words.

So if you've got your Bibles, have them open, Hebrews chapter 10 and I'm reading from verse 19. So he opens with these words and he's actually connecting with the words which go immediately before, but it's even bigger than that because he's connecting with everything that has happened in this book before and he's come to a change point.

There's a point here that really matters in the things that he wants to say and he wants to build his argument on what has already happened in Jesus. So the Old Testament system of worship was a model or you might even say it was an early prototype of a far greater reality.

The law, the priests, the high priests, the temple of Solomon with its most holy place were a kind of virtual reality. They gave the people a glimpse, see it's ancient technology, but it gave the people a glimpse of something that was real but it didn't give them the reality itself.

Now it's a big problem if you confuse what is real with what it isn't and the Jews did that.

[3 : 14] They got wrapped up in the bricks and mortar of the temple and this impressive building and they failed to see beyond it to the reality that it was pointing to. Show my age.

My parents got their first TV when I was born. If they had one before I was born, they might never have been born, might they? But I grew up watching the Flintstones and the Jetsons and the ABC News in black and white.

The TV man came regularly to replace the burnt out valves. You don't even know what a valve is in a television, do you? Do you know what a valve was? It's the ancient transistor. And in your television set you might have 20 valves.

Well now in your computer you've got a billion transistors built into that tiny little chip. So these valves were like globes up in the ceiling.

You'd pull one out and throw it away every so often. You'd get the repairman in to fix your TV. So I was in year 12 in 1975 when colour television came in. I think we were able to watch the sacking of the Whitlam government in glorious colour.

[4 : 20] We haven't got 3D TV yet. I'm still working on it. Not really. But if we had one the other night I'm sure it would have made me feel like I was there watching Tomek play at Wimbledon.

But I wasn't. Television's a virtual world. Isn't the real thing. And I can tell you I would rather have tickets sitting courtside with the princess than watching in the lounge room at home.

So when the preacher says, verse 19, therefore brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way open for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, he's summarising.

And he's summarising everything that's gone before and he's saying that the model is now obsolete because we have the reality. Because of Jesus, we are now sitting courtside at Wimbledon.

Brian and Deb in their messages last week said some great things about the passage that went before. They said that the Old Testament system of worship could take people so far but no further.

[5 : 41] And the temple was a great example. The nations could come into the outer courts. The Jews could come a bit closer to the centre. The priests could come a bit closer again as they offered their bloodied sacrifices and the place looked like an abattoir with all the blood that was being shed.

But the most holy place at the very centre of the temple, behind the curtain, was off limits to everyone with the exception of the high priest and he could go there only once a year if he made special preparation.

And he died if he got it wrong. And so the model taught the people that it was a big deal to come into the presence of God.

It needed big perfection, it needed big sacrifice. And no one was just safe to stroll into God's presence. Like, how are you going, mate? God's my mate, God's my friend.

You just couldn't do that. And even if we tried, we would be unable because we can't get ourselves into heaven. And so the model creates a picture that shows us the real world dilemma.

[6 : 59] We are cut off from a holy God who dwells in heaven and we are unable to find our way into his presence. And it's like Christ has stormed onto the centre court at Wimbledon and taken us with him.

Christ, this is chapter 9, verse 24, Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one. He entered heaven itself now to appear for us in God's presence.

And so in chapter 10, verse 19, and I've twisted the word slightly, but I hope you see that it's a true translation. Therefore we have, or it's true to the meaning, therefore we have confidence to enter heaven itself by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way which has been opened through his body.

So the old system's kaput. Why would you sit in the, can you imagine sitting in the stands at Wimbledon and you've got your TV so that you can watch the match when you're really at the match? Wouldn't that be stupid? Why would you go back to animal sacrifices in a fancy temple complex when Christ has been sacrificed once for all, never to die again and guaranteed a way into the presence of God forever?

Never. Ridiculous. So Christ has changed the game and the rubber hits the road for us and you see that in verses 22 to 25.

[8 : 23] He goes from talking about what Christ has done to talking about what we're asked to do. So let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

And let us hold unswervingly to the hope that we profess for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.

Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the day approaching. So he turns the spotlight onto us and not just you individually sitting in a pew tonight, maybe with friends around you.

But he's speaking to us as a group of people, as the body of Christ, those who have come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and who cling to him. And five times he says to us as a body, let us.

verse 22, let us draw near to God. Come to God.

[9 : 40] I don't know what's going on in your heart tonight. I love the invitational language of the scriptures where God draws us to himself. One of the temptations we face when gripped by sin is to get into it.

You know, you ever feel like you're fighting a war which will never be won over and over and over again and we can become almost depressed and down in the mouth and we can throw our hands in the air and we can say, what's the use?

And we pull away from God and we think things like, oh, he wouldn't want to know me, I'm too bad for him. And we do what Adam did at the very beginning of the Bible when he sinned. He hid from God.

God came looking for him and he was afraid. And he and Eve, when they sinned, became aware of their, they were naked before God before they sinned and no shame.

And after sinning, one of the awarenesses they had was of their own nakedness and they tried to deal with it by putting a few fig leaves together. Terribly effective. But deep down, we know that we are unworthy and in our pride and in our fear, we run from God.

[10 : 59] And the Bible says things have changed. Christ has made us worthy. We can confidently stand in God's presence without shame, clean, washed, pure.

And it does not matter where we have been in our lives before we have come to him. He is able to deal with it. And all our sinful failure, hate, murder, pride, sexual sin, malicious talking, all swept away by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. And so there is this extraordinary invitation, we can run to Christ. And we don't have to fake it with him, we don't, we can speak honestly to him without pretense, we don't have to be somebody to be in his presence.

A sincere heart, something which just tells the truth, God, you know what I am like. You know me, you know my thoughts, you know what I have done, you know what I struggle with, you know my insecurities, you know my fears.

Please forgive me, please help me. And as we do that, the gospel reminds us that our consciences are made clean again as we put our hope in Christ.

[12 : 32] He lifts that terrible burden of guilt and accusation from us, God sets us truly free. So Hebrews says, draw near, don't flee.

Stand fully secure in what Christ has done. And then in verse 23, second let us, let us hold unswervingly to the hope that we profess.

Now this is like, let's hang on for the ride. And I got this picture in my mind of one of those dirty big roller coasters. They used to have a great big wooden one at Luna Park in Sydney.

And we would ride it round and round and round and round again. But you know, the first click, click, click, click, click, click, click, click, click, click, click, she came to the top of the big hill and it began to roll over the top and then the downward ride.

The really bold ones throw their hands in the air. The rest of us, mere mortals like me, we just hang on to the bar for grim life, grim death. I saw one in the paper the other day that would be interesting to try out.

[13 : 40] It's a new one in Japan and it literally goes up the big hill. I saw a picture of it and not only goes down, it goes under and down at an angle. I need to draw it the right way. It does that.

It goes backward, upside down on the first hill. Sounds really exciting. But white knuckle ride. And so he's saying the admonition is to cling to the hope that we have in Christ.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope that we profess. Don't let go. And he's writing to believers who are doing it tough. He knows their circumstances.

Verse 32, remember those earlier days after you received the light when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering? Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution and other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated.

So these believers, they'd made a great beginning, a courageous beginning and he knows that they've had a really difficult journey. So verse 33, public exposure to insult and persecution.

[14 : 43] Verse 34, joyfully accepted the confiscation of their property. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine your mum or dad losing your house in Chatswood or roundabout because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ having taken it from them being left with all the insecurity that flows from that?

I read the other day about Christians in some parts of Syria right at the moment doing it really tough. They're trying to live as godly citizens in the towns that they're living in.

They're trying to honour their government even though we look at their government and say what an appalling government and the people in their town who are dissatisfied with their government.

Some of the people there are saying join us, rise up or get out. Join us or get out. There's no place for you here. Some of us who have come to hope in Christ and this might be you as a teenager or a young adult, you may have come out of families where he has not been known before and you may have stepped outside your family's rules and values in following Christ.

we've been ridiculed and perhaps pitied or despised for what we believe. Parents have a great way of dropping a little word and grinding the knife a little bit, twisting it a little bit to make us feel uncomfortable.

I can remember going out to prayer meeting on a Tuesday night after I became a Christian. I was 18 or 19 and my dad had a, it was partly because of my own weakness, my dad had a way of humiliating me because every week he'd say where are you going?

[16 : 15] He knew where I was going but he made me say it at the prayer meeting. Friends who like to remind us when we fail, there is others of us who perhaps miss out on promotion or perhaps opportunity at work because people know what we stand for and who we stand for and perhaps we won't be corrupted or behave in some of the ways that they might applaud.

And I think there are other days, dark days which come upon us for all sorts of reasons when we don't feel like Christ is very near. Holding on, clinging to the hope that we profess is the same as holding on to the gospel that we have been taught.

And it's like don't lose heart, don't shrink back, cling tenaciously to this hope that we profess, don't let go of Christ no matter how tough it is.

So the first two let us's are about clinging to Christ. The last three are about clinging to each other.

And they're about the sort of relationships that Christian believers have with one another. So verse 30, 24, let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

[17 : 45] Verse 25, let us not give up meeting together. Verse 25, let us encourage one another. Now I've got to tell you sometimes we Christians read this verse and we think oh that's the real, that's why we've got to come to church.

I didn't say to you you've got to come to church but that's the thing that we sometimes use to say you've got to come to church. And we present it like it's some sort of law or rule or principle that we've got to obey.

Go to church, keep the rule, make God happy. That sounds like fun doesn't it? Can you see how barren and sterile that is compared to the richness of what these verses convey?

This is about the whole body, this is all of us working with energy together in response to who Christ is and to what Christ has done. And so the focus of our interactions become things like how can I encourage you?

I don't come to church thinking oh what are they going to do for me tonight? How can I encourage you? What might I do here tonight which serves? What might I say here tonight that builds somebody up? What person might I know around the building who looks a bit lonely or on their own or nobody's talking to them?

[19 : 00] Maybe I'm the one who can step out of my comfort zone and speak to them. See what word can I speak that builds you up in Christ or grows you in Christ?

And sometimes most of the time it will be an affirming word and occasionally it will be a corrective word. A few weeks ago one of my sisters said to me after one of the services that I was promoting our small groups in a less than embracing way.

So I was making it sound like some of them are a bit too exclusive so there's no room there for you. And she said we've got to be more generous than that. And I went oh.

But it was said to me really gently it was easy to hear and she was right. And if my Christian sister had not said that to me I would not have seen it but I can stand here tonight and say to you she was right that was a really good thing to be shown.

Remember what I said the context? a little bit of that and a lot of the other. I see things here I think on Sunday night I see it in the morning as well you know our service finishes we speak to one another we interact which is just fantastic and see conversations go on and sometimes your heads go down as you actually stop and pray for one another.

[20 : 25] I think that type of interaction is enormously encouraging and great ministry while we're together. This will be harder for some of you because depending on your circumstances you may have your own home or the own place where you live others of you will be in your parents places and so that will have some bearing on the sort of hospitality that you can exercise but hospitality is a great way of Christians getting together to encourage one another going to one another's homes.

We do it in some measure in our small groups some of our small groups meet in people's homes but it's not just a formal meeting like a small group it's an informal meeting where we have friends over I think I've heard of fellow sleep which some of the girls were doing and the joy of that coming together for Christian encouragement moving around one another's home that's just a fantastic thing to be able to do but it's looking around as well and seeing who can we pick up into these networks of relationships that we have who can we invite amongst us who might not be one of us but perhaps we would like them invite them to join us or that we might go to them.

New sheet tonight's got the great example of the parish picnic and barbecue coming up in a couple of weeks time which is an opportunity for us as a congregation to mix with people from the other six congregations at St Paul's and perhaps have a better awareness of the bigger picture of who we are and the different cultures that are represented and the different backgrounds that people have.

in my last church I saw some lovely ministry happen amongst our older people so sometimes the oldies would grizzle about the younger ones you know if you write on the walls at church at kids church with chalk then some of the oldies look at stuff like that and go not the way to treat the building but that's because of the ways that they've been taught in the past and we'll talk more about that in a minute so some of these older ladies rather than grizzle I'll tell you something our older people sometimes say what are the young people doing we'd like to see more of them we'd like to know what they're doing so they are interested but I think they almost expect you to come to them which might not be the right way to do it and I say things to them I think this church is very much like my last church that the young people are heavily involved in ministry it's a great thing so the young people are leading the kids church ministry and they're leading the youth ministry and they're leading

D teams and they're actually quite heavily involved in the sort of commitments that they make here and the older people look at me sometimes and go oh I didn't realise that I forgot that and same back where we came from and after a while one of the groups of women got themselves together and decided well we want to encourage our young leaders so they decided they put on a celebration dinner for them they put on a dinner where they spoiled them and they invited all the youth leaders along gave them a great meal just to show appreciation to them for the ministry which they were doing wonderful thing I saw those ladies go and later one of the ladies in that group became very dissatisfied that they really didn't do a lot for other people and so they made a pact amongst themselves and these older ladies all got together and one at a time they worked around some of the groups at church and they invited them out to the same sort of thing they put on a dinner for them they'd have them along to encourage them in Christ and guess what happened when they did that there were all sorts of other fingers and webs that got established in relationship and far more appreciation that was happening for one another and what was going on and who people were and it was just great so hospitality a great means of generously spurring one another on in love and good deeds

[24 : 25] I'll tell you another story and I'm looking here tonight I don't think Anne Newman would mind me singling her out yes she did she winced but Anne is one of a number who are in this church family because of the way that they were cared for in Christ when they went through a very difficult time in life and they're amongst us now they've grown in Christ but they've been loved in Christ and there's a track record of 20 or 30 years which goes on in some of those relationships so for all of us some of the relationships we have now tonight amongst us as friends here I would hope and pray have an enduring quality to them which will be seen over a very long period of time I'm going to say this I said it to the morning people but I'm going to say it to you because I think it bears here as well but I've only been here 18 months and I've seen the downside as well I have seen some people leave church because they haven't been included they've never been asked into somebody's home or into their group of friends they'll come to church and really stand alone nobody talks to them I watched a couple this morning who've been here for quite a while more than 12 months and out there on the deck they were alone for a long time before anybody spoke to them other people leave because they don't like the way we work so they don't like the way we run a service so they don't like having to speak to other people about their faith there's some old people who hate talking to people about faith and so we do things I think you do it at Sunday night church I've seen you

Sam will throw out a question from the front and what he'll say he'll send you to go and interact over it and part of that is actually training you training us to be able to talk to one another about things of faith and to feel comfortable talking about things that are perhaps more substantial than how's the weather do I like the colour of church or stuff that we we don't really draw that close to one another I love speaking to our Chinese friends because some of them are very quick to say I'm not a Christian but guess what they're happy to talk about it we've been promoting life journals at church Sam hold it up it's got it there with him it's fantastic and I think I want to say to you that these are not just about you and your walk with the Lord which it is they are about us as a body growing in our relationship with Christ you will have much more that you can share if you give time and effort to reading God's word and relating to him you will grow in godly wisdom you will grow in a true understanding of his word as the Holy Spirit teaches and changes you I think a lot of my ministry comes from my walk with Christ

I began the service of this morning at 830 by talking about what Christ had said to me in my quiet time this morning as he read his word it's fresh for me it's real it's alive it's not just something that I learned somewhere in the past to keep talking about and so I want to say to you that if you are not reading your Bible you won't have anything fresh to share from your current walk with Christ and if you're not praying how can you look your brother or sister in the eye and say I'm praying for you now people often ask me to pray for them and if you ask me I am most likely to say can I pray for you right now and one of the reasons I want to do that is because I don't want to be the hypocrite who says yes I'll do it and then walk away and forget great way for us to interact with one another so there's five let us's and they boil down to two let us cling to Christ and let us cling to one another that is the whole of church life I want to say something from verse 26 before I begin to wrap up and that and it says this and this leads into the rest of the passage even though I won't go there but he says if we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth no sacrifice for sin is left and it's a bit of a clangor because it comes after all this good stuff and it seems to come from left field and I think if any of us are sitting here tonight with a tender conscience which is a great thing to have you may feel unsettled because we are very aware of sin in our life and at first reading this sort of verse seems to undermine our assurance and creates a lack of confidence in Christ and you ask yourself but how do you treat this verse when I've already spent considerable time in this message urging you to draw near to God sin and all the passage is saying come near to

God and this is saying oh there's no sacrifice left for sin if we deliberately keep on sinning but when I sin I do deliberately sin how do I reconcile these sorts of things and I think the answer is in the context he's writing to Jewish believers who've come to believe in Christ at great personal cost he's urging them to persevere they've already hung in there through humiliation and ridicule they have put up with gross injustices like the confiscation of their property but in the pressure it seems that some aren't getting together anymore I used to go to church oh yeah that was good a while back and it might be that they're even shrinking back and going back to some of the Old Testament ways of worship and they may well say I love God but this Jesus stuff is just a bit too hard and the writer is saying there is no other way there is no sacrifice for sin except

Christ and if you walk away from Christ there is no other way to heaven you can't go back to worshipping a Jew as a Jew like you were before or any other way and find your way into God's heaven and that is why he urges them to cling to Christ and to cling to one another I began this message speaking about virtual reality and reality some of you spend too much of your lives living in virtual reality what's that computer games and iPods and iPads I love them but we can be there for too long have a think about this building we meet in a building which we call church very unfortunate name some of our older members were taught from children so by ministers like me they were taught as children that this is the Lord's house so it somehow or rather becomes a special building it's got a little bit of a mix of temple thinking in there you know the place where God dwells and yet David I think said the Lord does not dwell in buildings made by man so we know good

[32 : 32] Bible teaching some of you think it's a great old church for your wedding and maybe you want it looking like this so that you got a nice long old walk down we could turn it sideways what would do with that what happened the aisle I guess you'd have to do a right angle turn as you came down wouldn't you but the building is fake as far as the things of God are concerned this is 60 years old I thought it was a much older church when I came here it's sandstone exterior gives the appearance of being a very old building and do you know it's a it's a sandstone building you get below that mortar and it's double brick walls so if we get a Christchurch type earthquake we'll all be buried here the organ pipes they're fake they're cardboard tubes can you believe it?

they're cardboard tubes you could set the bottom of one of them on fire and it'd blow like a chimney all the way to the top if you go across the road and you know the elevator up the side of the building I've been up there it's a great ride you ought to take it it's free you go up the top great view of the mountains but you look down on church you know what you see it's built like a cross so it's built to a particular way of thinking and it's model something we call the table up the front's cool what is it?

no we call it a table and it is a table it's flat surface that you put things on but in most Anglican churches the majority of Anglican churches around the world do call it an altar and the rail around it that marks off that area behind the rail is it's called the sanctuary the holy place someone somewhere in our history and I think maybe particularly in the 1800s thought that we were in the business of doing sacrifices so we've got our architecture confused with our theology and we have to let the Bible rule over our architecture Hebrews says incredibly clearly that there is only one sacrifice that matters the death of Christ has put an end to all the rest he has done everything necessary to take us into the presence of God he takes us into heaven and so it's easy for us at this service especially to mock the old stuff because that's maybe not where we've come from with those modes of thinking but if you've been sitting in church 60 years ago some of that stuff's what you would have been told and some of that stuff's the baggage that you would be carrying now and wrestling with but we have just read a passage which absolutely emphasises that it emphasises that it is what happens in this auditorium that matters and what happens outside this auditorium that matters in our lives and the lives of believers when the Jews stopped listening to Paul at the synagogue in Corinth he moved next door to the hall of Tyrannus and kept teaching what he was teaching in church just changed buildings didn't change what he was doing just rented a hall and kept going for it got the believers together they encouraged one another in love and good deeds they kept clinging to Christ even as they clung to one another and so I think it is absurd that we would ever hang on to virtual reality and miss out on the real thing

Amen Sam can tell me what to do he can tell me to go or stay but we talked about this after the service this morning and you felt like there were some implications that might flow through from some of this thinking even to 5.30 in a way that it doesn't for the older ones you want to take us there and at the same time if we've got a minute I'll just throw it open to questions that might flow from what we've been talking about Do you want to do that first?

Yep, anybody getting questions? I haven't got my Bible in my hand I might need it in my hand if you ask a hard one Sorry, question was how come we don't make the sign of the cross?

[37 : 59] which is a particularly Catholic tradition I think Yeah, there are some churches where it's a very normal tradition so Catholic, Orthodox some of the people do it it will come down to what they've been taught it's not something we have taught because you don't see it as something which is prescribed in the scriptures so I won't say it's a bad thing to do but for me straight away I don't see a reason to teach you to do it and I think it's probably wiser for us not to mock those who do That got off lightly, didn't it?

Yeah, it did Luckily for you there's a chance to continue churching together in this building after we've finished the formal part so maybe you've got questions that might come up afterwards that you might want to ask Chris or even chat about with one another Me and Chris were talking a little bit about this this morning in terms of we hear this sort of message and it's really easy for us to think those silly old people that think that's an altar or those silly old people who are really excited about cardboard tubes or whatever it is that they had but I just wanted to leave you guys a bit of time right now to maybe reflect that we have lots of things of our own that have become part of what church must be I think for me reflecting personally and in conversations with people it might sound silly but what time we do church is very precious for some of us Church shifts by half an hour and all of a sudden it's not the same church I used to be a part of it might be the fact that we had the offertory in song 3 instead of the last song which we don't have another song so it was the last song but things like that that we just grab hold of because that's what we've been doing our whole life we've been in church and what this passage has challenged us to reflect on is that there's there's two commands in there two let us commands that really matter and maybe we need to reflect on what other things we're clinging onto on top of Christ and one another so I want to give you some time right now to ignore that and just reflect for yourself what might those things be that you've kind of elevated onto that level alongside Christ and one another when it comes to what church is you've done ready to click on miss of each other from near to the

Like this it can be through and once I can biri