

Hebrews 10 v 35

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[0 : 00] Let's turn to the second part of the Bible that we read together, the letter to the Hebrews chapter 10.

And I want to take up the reading at verse 35 once again. Therefore, page 1211, Hebrews 10 verse 35, 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 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.

Reading through this passage, there's a question that comes to my mind that I think possibly sums up the huge challenge that we've read together.

[1 : 32] And that's the question. If your Christian life was like driving a car, what gear are you in right now?

Now, right away, of course, you're not accountable to me to answer that question. But you are accountable to God for the life that you're living in Jesus.

And every one of us is commanded to examine ourselves, to regularly review where we're at in the Christian life. And some might say to that question, well, surely that depends on what circumstances there are right now at the moment.

For example, some of you might even despair of thinking about that question. Some of you might look at other Christians, and it might appear as if they're flying in their Christian life.

It might appear as if they're growing at a rate of knots, developing, and that God is using them in an amazing way for his kingdom. And that makes you feel as if you're very slow and perhaps even stop.

[2 : 55] Perhaps some of you might think, well, I remember when I was first converted.

And it appeared as if I went up all the gears and reached the very top in a very short space of time. But now, 10 years, 20 years, perhaps even more later, with the hard experience of the Christian life, it doesn't feel like that anymore.

Remember, there are some times when you actually have to shift down a gear. When you're climbing a hill in the car, there's no point in climbing that.

If you go up the Clisham in sixth gear, you'll soon come to a stop. The car will stall. You have to climb down to second or even first when you're going up a hill.

It's the same in the Christian life. There are times when you have to come all the way back down to the basics. And it's the basics of what we have in Jesus that keeps us going.

[4 : 03] It's the same with going down a hill. You go down the Clisham in sixth gear, you're likely for the car to go out of control. Go around a bend and you'll go off the road. You have to change down. To control the car.

Same in the Christian life. Be very careful when it appears that you're going downhill. Because that's very often when the tempter comes in and he tells us that things are going great.

And we don't need the basics in the Christian life. We're strong enough by ourselves. We're doing great. We don't need to change down. No, no. That's the time when you have to change down.

Because it's the basics that keeps us, that keeps the cross in front of our eyes. And that takes us safely down the hill.

But actually, when I ask the question tonight, what gear are you in? I don't mean whether you're in first or whether you're in sixth. What I'm asking is, are you in forward or reverse?

[5 : 03] Because that's what it's all about. Oh, there are times when if you're in forward, you'll be in sixth. And other times when you'll be in first.

But what really matters tonight is this. Are we going forward? Or are we going back? Or are we standing still?

In which case the danger is to go back. Especially if you're on a hill. You put the car on a hill and you put it into neutral. And you stand still. The car's going to slide backwards.

And that's the question I'm asking this evening. The people to whom this letter was written were in great danger of going backwards.

People have argued for centuries over why this letter was written and who it was written to. It's clear that it was written to Jewish people. People of Jewish extraction.

[6 : 01] Their background was Jewish. And you and I just don't appreciate what it must have been like to have been converted from being a Jew. It's the same today. Because there are few cultures in the world that are so closely knit.

In which the people are so closely knit to their practices. And to everything that they've been brought up to believe than the Jewish people. That's why it's so hard for a Jewish person to actually accept Jesus.

Very often their family will disown them. And if that happens nowadays. When the Christian faith is so well known. You can imagine what it was like in those days. When the Christian faith wasn't so well known.

These people were being persecuted by their families. They were being disowned. Because they had turned to Christ. Now that's all very well for the first day or for the first week. But once.

As time goes on. It begins to get harder and harder and harder. To live such an isolated and a lonely life. Besides.

[7 : 01] These people had a background. Where they had. Where they had adopted certain beliefs. For example. Let me just. Let me just. Two minutes.

For our own interest. As to the. Probably the best suggestion. That anyone has made. As to who. This letter was written to. The suggestion is that.

There were people from the Qumran sect. The Dead Sea sect. And. They believed. The following. They believed that a day would come. When two messiahs would come. A king and a priest.

And the king would be. Subject to the priest. They believed that both of these. Would be subject to the. Archangel Michael. And that Michael would have rule. Over the whole world.

They believed in the. The appearance of another Moses. A Moses that would be similar. To the original Moses. And who would. Rule. Just like Moses ruled.

[7 : 59] The people of Israel. In the desert. And they expected also. That. The priesthood. That we spoke about last week. It would reemerge. And that sacrifices would be made.

Once again. All over the world. And that God would be worshipped. Through the sacrificial system. Now. These Christians. Who had come from that background. The easiest thing in the world.

For them. As persecution went on. Was to be tempted. To go back. Into that way of thinking. King. And whoever wrote this letter. We don't know quite who it was.

He was very. Very concerned. And so the whole of this letter. Is an argument. Against all of these. Beliefs. That the Dead Sea. Sect. Believed.

In other words. That. Whilst there are angels. Michael. Gabriel. And so on. These angels. Are all.

[8 : 56] Subservient. To Jesus Christ. And that whilst Moses. Was truly a great leader. Moses. Looked forward. To the day. When Jesus. Would come. And when his sacrifice.

Would. Would be. The sacrifice. When he would. Once and for all. Give his own life. As the payment. For our sin. And so there would be.

No more priesthood. According to the book. The letter to the Hebrews. There would be. No more Moses. Because there wasn't. Any need. For anything like that. Because Jesus. Had fulfilled.

Everything. That all of these things. In the Old Testament. Looked forward to. Now tonight. There is. Very little danger. Of us. Being influenced.

By a Dead Sea. sect. Neither is there. Any danger. Of being. Being tempted. To go back. Into the Old Testament.

[9 : 51] And to do sacrifices. And the. Tabernacle. And the temple. And the priesthood. And all of these things. That were. That were gone. Long time ago. But we are still.

Tempted. To listen. To the wrong voices. In every generation. God's people. Are under threat. And the threat.

Very often. Comes from within. Themselves. And the kind of. Environment. In which. They listen. To the prevailing. Opinions. And you get. Sucked into. The kind of. Lifestyle.

Around you. Is that not the case? And whatever. Your determination. When you're first. Converted. The devil.

Says. I'm not in any hurry. We'll see. How this person. Fares. In 10 years time. Or in 20 years time.

[10 : 46] Let them be enthusiastic. At the moment. It's great. Let Jesus have him. But then. When he gets tired. I'll have a go. And we'll see.

Where he stands then. This letter. Is written. To Christians. Who are tired. And Christians. Who are tempted.

And Christians. Who are at a standstill. And Christians. Who are in danger. Of falling back. Into sin. And into their own way.

Into their old ways. And tonight. I want us to look. At this passage. Particularly. Three things. That the apostle says. Three things.

Earlier on. In the passage. Verse 22. First of all. Look at it with me. He says this. Let us draw near. With a true heart. In full assurance.

[11 : 45] Of faith. Now I know. That drawing near. Is much more than prayer. But I wanted to confine it. Simply tonight. For the basis. For the help of. I hope.

Someone who's here tonight. Who's wavering. Perhaps. And who's feeling. The pressure. Of the world. Around us. As we all do.

From time to time. That's the first thing. Prayer. The second thing. Is. Found in verse 23. The next verse. Let us hold.

Fast. That describes. The determination. That each one of us. Ought to have. To lay hold. Upon Jesus Christ.

And continue to do so. We're going to call that. Perseverance. And then. In the next verse. Let us consider. Let us consider.

[12 : 41] What? How to stir one another up. To love. And to good works. I'm going to call that. Provocation. That's what it is. In the old AV Bible. Let us consider. How we may provoke.

One another. To love. And to good works. There's three things. I want you to remember tonight. Prayer. Perseverance. And provocation.

Prayer. Perseverance. And provocation. But before we come to that. I think it's important. To see the manner. In which the writer. Tells him this. You know. There's nothing worse.

When you're struggling. For somebody. To come along to you. And tell you. What you ought to be doing. To point the finger at you. And to start preaching to you. And to start nagging you.

And to say. Well you're wrong. Everybody knows. We know. That we. Sometimes find ourselves. In situations. Where. We. Fail. As Christians.

[13 : 36] And the last thing we need. Is for somebody. Who thinks. That they're able to. Look in from the outside. And maybe they are able to.

But you know. What the apostle does. Is quite marvelous. It's quite clear to me. That whoever's writing this letter. He knows from his own experience. What it is to struggle. In his Christian life. Because he says.

Let us. He's saying. I'm with you. In this. I know. What I'm talking about. I can think of. Times in my own Christian life. When I struggled.

And when I slid back. And when I failed to persevere. And when I lost sight. Of who I was. As a Christian. And I listened too much. To the voices.

To the wrong voices. And I got sucked into the influences. Around me. And I allowed sin. To creep. Into my life. Things that were harmful. To my Christian life.

[14 : 32] I know what it is. And do you know what? This evening. I confess to you. That in 40 years experience. As a Christian. I too know.

What it's like. To struggle as a Christian. And I know what it's like. To sin. As a Christian. I know what it's like. To backslide.

To listen to the wrong voices. To be influenced. The wrong way. To go astray. That's the only way. You can help somebody. By knowing yourself.

What you're talking about. But you know what? I don't believe. There's a single. Child of God. In this building tonight. Who doesn't. Know what it's like. To struggle. You all know.

What it's like. To struggle. We're all in this together. You know that. The problem is. When you. When you go astray. As a Christian. You think you're alone.

[15:33] You think you're the first person. Ever to do it. And you think you're alone. But you're not. Other people. Have had exactly. The same experience. And that's why.

It's so important. To come back. To a passage like this. And to see. How the apostle. He's encouraging. He's saying. Right. What are we going to do. About this? We don't want to just. Look into ourselves.

All the time. And talk. And talk. And talk about. Where we're at. But what do we do about it? Well here's the three things. Here's where the answer lies. Here are the signposts. The first one of them. Is prayer. Let us draw near. That's what prayer is. Prayer is not some formal. Cold. Empty. Exercise. That you see done in church.

Prayer is actually meeting. With the Lord. Oh you say. I've heard all that before. And yet I've failed. Well how have you failed? You say. Well what? You say. Well when I pray.

[16:28] It just doesn't work. It just doesn't happen. I don't feel as if I'm praying. That's why the apostle says this. Look. He says. Let us draw near with a true heart. In full assurance.

Faith. Faith. Faith. Faith. Faith. What is faith? Faith is when you look away from yourself. And when you look to Jesus. And if you're coming to prayer.

And if you're coming to the Lord in prayer tonight. Resting on what Jesus has done for you. Then you're coming in faith. And the Lord is listening to you. Whether you feel like it or not.

Oh so many of us. Isn't it true that so many of us. We give up. I know what it's like. You give up in prayer. Because you feel. You're giving up on God. You feel that. Somehow. Somehow that the Lord has stopped listening to you.

Why should he stop listening to you? He's promised to be your God. And your Lord. He loves you with a love that goes beyond. What you imagine. So why should he stop listening to you?

[17:29] If he's your father in heaven. Those of us who are fathers and mothers. Have we ever stopped listening to our children? Even when they go astray. Even when they come to us. And they know that they've done wrong. You never stop loving them.

You never stop accepting them. You never throw them out the house. They don't stop being your sons. Neither does God's children. Do they stop being his sons and his daughters. And we.

The catechism tells us. We have a right to all the privileges. Of the children of God. It was just as difficult. In Jesus time. For men and women to pray.

They had all kinds of hang ups. It was only the Pharisees that prayed. They were the ones who knew the religious language. They were the only ones who were next to God. It wasn't for the ordinary people at all.

That's why Jesus says. Look. Forget the Pharisees. They're not being heard by God. Because they think they're being heard. For their long words. And their long prayers. That's not the way it works.

[18:26] Because your father who sees in secret. He will reward you openly. So when you pray. Ordinary people. You don't have to be qualified. You just simply need to be a child of God.

You go into your closet. Whatever that is. It could be your bedroom. It could be your car. It can be whatever secret place you go to. To be with the Lord. Because ultimately.

Whatever condition your Christian life is in tonight. And even if you don't have a Christian life. Then. It's the Lord. The Lord you have to come to. Because that's who you're answerable to.

Ultimately. It's only him who can save you. In the first place. And it's only him who can rescue you. So come to him. Come to him believing. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Maybe you're saying.

Well I don't even know if I'm a Christian. Well become a Christian. Now. The offer is open. The offer is there.

[19:22] He who comes to me. Says Jesus. I will in no wise. Never. Cast away. So if you've concluded tonight. That you're not a Christian. Then.

Now's the time to be. The Bible. Never allows us. To give up on Christ. Come to the Lord.

And believe that the Lord is listening to you. Not just because of who you are. Not because. Of your performance. But because of who you are.

And what the Lord has made you. You haven't made yourself a Christian. God has made you a Christian. He has adopted to be your son. His son. His daughter. And so it's on that basis.

That you come. Even if you're confessing. Some of the most shameful things. Then you come. With a full assurance.

[20 : 22] Of faith. With our hearts sprinkled clean. Because the blood of Jesus Christ. Cleanses us. From all sin. Prayer. Don't give up on it.

You come to the Lord. If you never come before. Then come tonight. May tonight's prayer. Be the first prayer. That you. The real prayer. That you ever make. Lord have mercy upon me. A sinner. When you come to him. And you accept him. You confess. That you made a mess of your life. You have nowhere else to go to. You know. That you'll never find contentment. Or happiness. Or the promise of everlasting life.

Anywhere else. Apart from Jesus Christ. And you want to take that. You want to take it now. And accept him. And surrender to him. That's how to enter his kingdom. By faith. And if you're in his kingdom.

And if you've blown it. And you've made a mess of it. As I've done. Many many times. Then go again. And again. And again. And you come to him. And you accept his mercy. In the Lord Jesus Christ.

[21 : 24] And then. The second thing. He tells us to do. Is to hold fast. Hold fast. The confession. Of our hope. Without wavering. And I've called that perseverance. And that's when you stop. And you think about.

What your life means. And where your life is going. And what the world means. And you think about. Why you're here. In this world. Sometimes you have to come. All the way back.

To the basics. Come back. Down to first gear. Put the car in first gear. What's the first gear? It's thinking. Of the existence of God. There either is.

Or there isn't. If there isn't. Then there is no meaning. To anything. I've said this. Countless times before. The world needs to hear. This message. Because the world. Is being persuaded. That there is no God.

[22 : 20] There is every reason. Tonight. To believe. That there is a God. And the reason is. Because we're here. And we're asking these questions. And God has placed. Within our consciousness.

And our minds. The questions. That can only be answered. By the existence of God. If he didn't exist. I would not be asking this question. I would not have the reason.

Process. In my logical thinking. To say. There has to be a reason. Why I'm here. You've got to go out. And you've got to tell people that.

You ask them questions. Why do you not believe in God? Why are you so against. The idea. That there is a God. You see. Atheism. The form of atheism. Which you and I.

Have to face. In the world we live in. Is not an atheist. Which doesn't care. It's an atheism. Which does care. And they want to eradicate. Religion. They believe that religion.

[23 : 14] Is a virus. And that it's harmful. To the human race. In other words. What they want to do. Is out of sight. Out of mind. If I don't have to think. About the gospel. I don't have to believe. In the gospel.

But nothing is going to take away. The truth. That God is. Because God. Has placed the knowledge. In our hearts. That he is. Romans chapter 1. And verse 18.

God. Has. Witnessed to himself. We know. That there is. A God. And you move on from there. And you ask. Well which voice. Do I listen to. You come to the Bible.

And you discover Jesus. And you ask. How can you explain. You see. I don't believe. I'm not a Christian tonight. Because. On one night. When I was a teenager.

40 years ago. I asked Jesus. Into my heart. That's true. I did. But that's not why. I'm a Christian. I'm a Christian. Because this.

[24 : 10] Man. Jesus. Christ. Is. Totally unique. In all the history. Of the world. I cannot find. A figure like him. No one. Comes anywhere.

Near him. No one. Can hold a candle. To him. And everything. To my. As far as I can see. Is utterly. Consistent. With what the Bible. Teaches. That God.

Is righteous. We have gone wrong. As a world. And yet. You know what the most. Amazing thing is. That God. Should love that world. And send. Himself. In the person.

Of his own son. Jesus Christ. To become one of us. To become a human being. A baby. At Bethlehem. And to grow. To spend time.

Amongst people. To prove. Amongst. The towns. And villages. Read the gospels. Again. Read through the Bible. See the problem. Is that when you give up.

[25 : 04] On the Christian faith. You give up on the Bible. And when you give up. On the Bible. You forget. All the marvelous truths. That there are. And they demand. They demand. Who is.

This man. How can I explain. This man. Was it just a figment. Of the imagination. Of those who wrote. Well they all. There were. Dozens of people. Who saw the same things. Him walking on the water.

Him touching someone. Who was blind. And that person's eyes. Were open. He raised people from the dead. They weren't done in secret. They were done openly. How can you explain. This phenomenal.

Period. In human history. When in front of. Dozens and dozens. And sometimes hundreds of people. This man. Miracle. After miracle. After miracle. Which proves.

That God. Had intervened. In the human history. And had spoken. The reason why. I'm a Christian tonight. Is not only that.

[26 : 00] Jesus. Is extraordinary. But that he rose. From the dead. That's where it all begins. For me. Because to me. It's either true. Or it's false.

If it's false. It's the biggest lie. That's ever. Been communicated. In the world. If it's true. It's the most marvelous. Message. In the whole world. And if it's true. Then everything.

Makes sense. The world that I live in. Makes sense to me. It's a world. That's broken. As we heard this morning. Because of our own. Human wickedness. And sin. And wrongdoing. But it's a world. Into which God has come. And he. With healing. And with forgiveness. In the person. Of Jesus Christ. The gospel. Places a huge challenge.

It's either. It's either true. Or it's not. It's one or the other. But if it's true. Then I've got to live for it.

[26 : 55] Why should I fuff about? Do I believe? Do I not believe? I can't be half-hearted about it. I can't be mediocre about it.

Because if I am. I'm going to waste my life. Remember what Adam said this morning. About all the hours that you waste. You waste your whole life. Wondering this. Wondering that. If this is true. If this gospel is true. Then it deserves my life. And my all. And that's what Jesus commands me. He says. If anyone would come after me. He must deny himself. And take up his cross daily. And follow me. It's all or nothing. That's what the apostle is saying here. Let us hold fast. And then he says.

Let us consider. Consider. Consider what? Verse 24. Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and to good works.

[27 : 53] Not neglecting to meet together. As is the habit of some. Provocation in the church of Jesus. God has given us. God has given us. God has brought us together.

He doesn't want us to be private individuals. Well of course we are to a certain extent. But God has brought his people together as a church. As a community of his people. And that's for a reason.

It's not for no reason. That we all come here together this evening. That we belong to this congregation. And that God has brought us. He's assembled us together to worship him.

But he's also brought us together to be a living witness to him. In the fellowship that we enjoy. And the word fellowship. It's a special word that describes the bond.

That there is between Christians. Now if that bond breaks. Or if you neglect it. Or you can't be bothered with it. That's what it says here.

[28 : 56] Not neglecting. To meet together. What this verse tells us is that there's two ways in which the church operates. There's the meeting together.

Which we're not to neglect. We're meeting together on a Sunday. To sing his praises. To hear his word. To be reminded of what he's done for us. But we meet together.

Don't we? At other times. Does it make any sense for the church just to simply come together. And then go away again. As very often happens. Is that how a healthy church works?

I would suggest to you. No it's not. That meeting goes far beyond what we do here on a Sunday. Meeting together is interactive. Protecting. Helping. Caring.

Washing the feet of one another. As we heard. It means loving one another. It means stirring one another up. You know. The church. A healthy church.

[29 : 50] Always has its stirrers. And I know that some people stir badly. There's a wrong way of provoking.

In which you can cause a lot of trouble. In any group of people. That's not what the apostle means. He's talking about provoking in a positive way. He's talking about the duty that each one of us have. To interact with one another. To know one another. To help one another. And that requires determination. On our part. It requires involvement. It requires doing just that one thing after another.

To play our part in the fellowship of God's people. And the more involved we are. In the operation of a fellowship. The more strengthened we are.

[30 : 57] In our own faith. So let us. Remember prayer. So let us remember perseverance.

And let us remember. Provocation. These three elements. Are absolutely essential.

To keep us going. To make sure that we are in forward gear. To make sure that we are going in the right direction. And not regressing. Or retreating.

Or receding. Because we are not of those. Who shrink back. And are destroyed. But of those who have faith.

And preserve. Their souls. The apostle tells them. The apostle goes on to say. That they are to think about the privilege.

[31 : 58] That they have. The time has gone. I am just going to read these. In verse 19. The privilege. That they have. He tells them. About the alternative.

To what they are. For if we go on sinning deliberately. After receiving the knowledge of the truth. There is no longer remains sacrifice for sin. That's a very simple statement. If you choose a life of sin.

Knowing the truth. Then where are you going to get your forgiveness from? The sacrifice has already been made. On the cross. What sense does it make? If you.

Turn away from that. And choose a life. Of sin. It just doesn't make any sense. In verse 32. They were to think about. The old days.

When they were so alive. But yet. That life. That they once had. It meant struggling. It meant suffering. It meant sympathizing with others. It meant surrender. Of their property. And their goods.

[32 : 55] Then in verse 35. He says this. Do not throw away. Your confidence. Each one of us. Has. A lot to lose.

By going into reverse gear. But everything to gain. By keeping on.

By moving forward. By laying hold. Upon the cross. Because one day. This world.

Which is such a temptation. To us. Will be destroyed. And the Lord Jesus. Will come back again. And he will require us.

To stand before him. And to give an account. Of how we have lived our lives. And that.

[33 : 55] On that day. There will be those. Those who have. Rested. And trusted. In Jesus Christ. And lived for him. And those. Who haven't.

I'm going to. Stop by asking. Exactly the same question. And anticipating that. For some of us anyway. There might be the answer. Well. I read that verse.

And I'm deeply troubled by it. Because I. Think I have shrunk back. In my Christian life. Verse 35. We are not of those. Who shrink back.

And are destroyed. Perhaps we feel we have. Shrunk back. We've receded. In our Christian lives. This evening. It's a bit like a plant. If you don't give that plant.

Water. Then. That plant. Will shrivel. That's the idea. That the apostle has. Whether grow as Christians. Or else we shrink. Back. I remember.

[34 : 56] On many occasions. My wife. Telling me. To. If she was away. For any length of time. Visiting relatives. Or whatever. To telling me.

To water the plants. And you know. My memory. Not good. Watering the plants. Has never been. A great priority.

It's found. My mind. And. Often. I would get caught. Not having done. What I should have done. I remember.

On one occasion. Not having watered. The plants. And I didn't even notice. The way they had shriveled. Down. I thought they were dead. I felt so bad.

But what amazed me. Was this. When you did water them. How quickly. They came back. To life again.

[35 : 54] That's the way. It is for a Christian. God's intention. Is for you. To flourish. As a Christian. And his intention. Is to bring healing.

And restoration. And. Forgiveness. To all of us. This evening. I suppose. In. One way. We've all. None of us. Are where we should be.

But make sure. That tonight. We drink. From the water. That he has provided. For us. And it's amazing. How quickly. We come to life.

As we rely. And as we depend. Upon him. Let's pray. Our father in heaven. We ask now. That you will. Nourish us.

By your word. We pray Lord. That. Because we all. Come to you this evening. In our weakness. And in our failures. And. We all need. Your word. To draw us.

[36 : 52] Back to you. We pray Lord. That you will. Give us. To concentrate. On. What we've been thinking. About this evening. The. The prayer. And the perseverance.

And the provocation. We ask. We ask. Oh Lord. That each one of us. May lay hold. Upon these three principles. And that we might. Put them to good use. As we're helped. And as we're led. By the Holy Spirit. For we ask in Jesus name. Amen.