

Do Not Throw Away Your Confidence

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[0 : 0 0] I want us to turn back to the chapter we read in Hebrews chapter 10. I'm looking again at verse 35.

Hebrews 10, verse 35. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. I think one of the greatest things that we can do for anybody as we journey through life is to encourage people.

We live in a world where it's very easy to be discouraged. There are many things that can get us down, many things that can weigh in heavily upon us. And we always appreciate people who will encourage us as we go along, even if it's just a little encouragement.

Just a little word that lifts us up and spurs us on. And I think we always appreciate people who are encouraging by nature. In fact, people who are encouragers by nature are often, we could say, worth their weight in gold.

[1 : 1 1] And particularly in the Christian life, it is important for us to encourage one another. The easiest thing in the world is to knock somebody. It's part of sin.

It's part of the way of sin is to be critical. Dead easy. It's the easiest thing in the world. It costs a person a lot more sometimes to praise and to lift people up.

And I think it's very important for the Christian to encourage other Christians in the faith. And that's something that the apostle was often doing.

And we find it running right through the Bible is the importance of encouraging one another in the faith. And that was one of the features of this particular epistle is how often the writer encouraged. Now, we also know that it is an epistle that contains severe admonitions and an epistle that gives very, very serious warnings.

[2 : 1 4] In fact, we were reading through that in this very chapter. But it's also an epistle, a letter that is full of inspiration and full of encouragement. And that's what this closing section is very much about.

It's encouraging the Christians in the race that is before them. Now, as we know, it was no easy thing to be a Christian in the days when this letter was written.

Because to become a Christian, there was a strong possibility that you would lose your home. You would lose all your privileges. You would lose your land.

You were very likely to be imprisoned. And there was a fair chance you'd be put to death. There was a real oppression of Christianity in these days.

And so the first thing that the apostle does here is he reminds the Christians of how faithful they have been already. How faithful they've been regarding persecution in the past.

[3 : 1 6] That's what he says in verse 32. 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 so on. These people had stood firm under the hardship, under the persecution.

And, you know, it's a great thing when you see people keeping going. You know, it encourages.

Sometimes Christians are encouraging other Christians without realizing it.

Because when you see, for instance, a Christian who's going through a really hard time. Difficulty in their own life.

And yet their faith continues to shine bright. And they keep going. And day in, day out. Week in, week out. Where there's no doubt there'll be a temptation from Satan to pack it in.

[4 : 1 6] To turn around and say, well, what benefit is there in serving God? Remember, that's how Asaph. Asaph was actually tempted to think like that. We read about it in the Psalms. But, of course, God changed his view very quickly.

And brought him back to see what he had and the preciousness of what he had. But it's an encouraging thing. And we've often seen it. We will see Christians facing great adversity. And facing real problems and real trials in their own life. And the life of their family. And in all the different things. And yet keeping going, keeping going, keeping going. And we see this as the evidence of faith.

A faith that won't give up. A faith that is completely committed. A faith that is prepared to fight on against every obstacle and against every enemy.

But we see that what helped these people to keep going, that their faith progressed, was that they were seeing by faith beyond the here and now.

[5 : 19] So, in verse 34, it tells us, 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.

In other words, what we see here is that they not only accepted what had happened to them, but they actually rejoiced. Rejoiced that their property was taken from them.

Now, we might find that strange. And at one level of reading, you do. Because if, for instance, that the state were to come to your house, my house today, throw us out, take all our property away, or smash a dip or whatever.

I don't think joy would be the word that would come to my mind. I wouldn't be, I cannot for one moment think that I'd be there rejoicing.

Oh, it's great that they're taking away that. It wouldn't be the natural response. But what we've got to understand here is that these were times of real persecution.

[6 : 28] This was only part of it where their property was taken from them. And they were rejoicing. They weren't rejoicing in the fact that their property was being smashed up or taken from them.

They were rejoicing in the Lord because the Lord had given them the spirit of joy. And that is part of what it appears God gives to his people through the fires of persecution.

The people of God are given this joy where they counted joy to be, or counted, they experienced this joy when they're counted worthy to suffer for Christ.

That's the reason why, to the amazement of the authorities, we read about it in Acts when the apostles were taken, Peter, James, John, all the apostles right at the beginning of Acts, and they were beaten.

That they came out rejoicing. And the people couldn't understand, why are they rejoicing? It wasn't because they had, it wasn't that they were enjoying the pain of the beating.

[7 : 35] Not at all. But God had given them this spirit of joy. And it was a joy that wasn't in any way dependent on circumstances.

So often in life, we feel happy when things are going well. We feel sad when things are going against us. But God gives his people in the fires of persecution, he gives them this joy in himself. And it's a joy that overflows. That is why we often read of martyrs singing in the flames. It seems extraordinary.

It's against human nature. But it is because God has given of himself, poured himself in in a powerful, personal way into people's hearts and souls, so that they are rejoicing.

It's why Paul and Silas were able to sing praises to God in prison, in Philippi, after their beating. A severe beating. And they were there in the maximum security wing of the prison.

[8 : 40] And their feet were in chains. And yet they're singing praise to God. Not because their backs are sore. Not that they were oblivious to the suffering and the pain that they'd experienced.

But the joy of the Lord was so great that that joy had broken out and given expression like this. And so this is what we have here, where God gives this powerful sense of himself, of his love, of his joy. And that's what was happening here for these early Christians. That they had experienced this joy in the face of persecution. But there was another side to it as well, because it tells us not only was this joy given to them, you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

But they were seeing their homes being taken. They were seeing their goods being taken. And these are difficult things.

Now I know we're all different, and some people find it very easy to throw out things. Others of us, and I say us, find it hard. But the thing is that at the end of the day, it would be a strange person who would throw out everything that they had in the house.

[10:11] Because so much of what we have is part of ourselves. It's part of what makes the life that we live what it is.

It's home. And these are the things that are familiar to us, the things that we need, the things that we use, the things that are part of our everyday life. So to see these things being taken away and thrown away, and you don't have them anymore, is difficult.

However, for what these early Christians were doing, as they were seeing these things, they were looking beyond. And they were saying, our real home, our real possession, our real property, it's not here.

These things are only for a little. God was giving them joy in the midst of their suffering, but also the faith to look beyond. Look beyond to the place where there is a possession and an inheritance, where rust and moth cannot get through and destroy, where thieves can't break in and steal. And so this is what they were able to see. They were looking way ahead. And you know what shows us the folly of those who live only for what this world can give.

[11:37] And there are many people who never, ever, ever look beyond what they can do and get in this world. But you see, supposing you lived in the best home in the country with the finest furniture, and with all the greatest accessories, and all the smartest cars, and the biggest bank balance, and supposing you went through your life and you never lost any of these things, it's only for a little while.

You see, this is a great mistake that people make. If all we had was this life, and then that was it, then that might be different.

But that's not how it is. It's God who has made us, and he has made us a living soul. And that soul is in this body, and this soul and body and mind is all part of the life that we live.

But the thing is that when we die, we physically die, but our soul continues forever and ever and ever. And that's why the Lord says, yes, I've given you all these good things in life, for life, and to help you in life, and to enjoy life, but enjoy me in life above everything else.

because you are going to live forever. And if that's all that you have in life, then you've got nothing. You've got nothing for death, nothing for eternity.

[13:12] And that's how the folly of it is. And those who give their life purely to these things are those who build their life upon the sand. If we're building our life on Jesus Christ, then we're building upon the rock.

And so the Christian, they were looking ahead, and they were seeing while they were losing things that were important and things that were precious to them, yet they were seeing to the inheritance that was laid up undefiled, reserved in heaven for them.

And so the apostle then, in light of all that, he then turns to them and he says, therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

Now, of course, our confidence is rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are persuaded that what we have committed to him, he is able to keep.

That's what it tells us. He is able to keep that which we have committed to him. That's what he's able to do. And what have we committed to him? Well, we have committed our life to him.

[14:28] And we are persuaded that he's able to keep our life. Because we can't keep it ourselves. You can't. I can't. We do not have the resources. We don't have the power.

We don't have the potential. We cannot. But he can and he does. And it's the Lord who will look after your soul. And you might be saying to yourself today, well, how do I know that the Lord has my soul?

Well, my dear friend, if you today are a believer, you know that you were drawn by him to himself. There was a drawing where you began to desire him.

You wanted the Lord. You're here today and you look to your life and you say, you know, I can remember a place, a point in my life where I began to want the Lord.

Where life lost for me the satisfaction it used to give. Oh yes, I still enjoy life. But I knew there was more.

[15:37] There was something. That someone, not just something, someone I needed. And I began to realize the one I needed was the Lord.

I really began to want him, to ask him, to seek him, to desire him. You know, my friend, who began that work in you?

It wasn't yourself. It was the Lord who began it. And we believe that he who has begun a good work will perform it.

In other words, he will keep doing it, working in it until the day, until the end of the day. And the thing is that you're still following the Lord.

Why? Why have you not turned away from following the Lord? Is it because you have become part of the church and you would feel ashamed to walk away?

[16:39] Is it because of other people? Of what they may say? Is that why you're following the Lord today? And you say to yourself, you know, if I had the courage, I would walk out that door and I'd never come back.

If I had the courage, I would call it a day. And I would say to folk, I made a mistake. But you're not saying that.

Why? Because we were looking at that recently, like what Peter said, Lord, to whom else can we go? There is no one else. I've been down other roads before and there's nothing there.

To whom else can we go? That's why you're still following. And you're following because of that work of grace that is there within your heart. You can't help it. See, that's what grace does.

Grace draws. Grace keeps. Who are kept. We are kept by the power of God unto salvation. And so you say, I know in whom I have believed.

[17:43] And that's confidence. You can't have confidence in someone that you don't know. You wouldn't trust your life to a stranger. You wouldn't tell a stranger that you had never met before.

Supposing, for instance, you had to go to the bank and you can't go for some reason. And supposing you're sitting in your car and you urgently need money and this person is passing by and you say to them, look, I'm stuck here just now but I really need money.

Look, there's my card. There's my pin number. Go and get money. You've never met the person before. That would be kind of absurd because you'd be placing your confidence and trust in someone that you'd never even met in your life.

A person might be trustworthy, they might not. But our confidence is placed in someone that we know. And that's what it says. I know in whom I have believed.

And that's why we have this confidence in him. and we have confidence in him because he's faithful. God is faithful. He's faithful to every promise that he has made.

[18:56] And we are completely persuaded that he does all things well, that he's ruling and overruling all things. Now you know, it's very easy at one level to say, I have faith in the Lord when everything's going well.

Today as a believer, your life might be going really smoothly. And as you look around at all fronts, everything is what you would term going quite well.

And in many ways it's quite easy for a person for the believer to say, well, my faith is good just now. But you know it's another thing when everything isn't going well.

And when there's illness and tragedy and you lose your job and things go pear-shaped and you're hurt and you're in emotional turmoil and everything is upside down in your life, that's when real faith comes into evidence.

That shows the reality of that faith. As we said, that faith that keeps going. Well, as we saw these early Christians, that's how it was for them. And they had this confidence in the Lord, a confidence of faith.

[20:12] They were persuaded of the completeness and the personalness of Christ's work for them. And you know it's a wonderful thing that this Lord who is from everlasting to everlasting is for you.

This is a confidence that you have today. And that's what the apostle says, if God is for you, who can be against you?

It's not a wonderful thought. If God is for you, who can be against you? There might be loads of people who are against you. There might be loads of things against you. We know that the world is against you.

We know that Satan is against you. But if God is for you, who can? It means in that that even those who are against you will never prosper ultimately if the Lord is for you.

And that's such a wonderful comfort. And that, of course, was such a comfort to the believers. So we have confidence in our Savior.

[21 : 17] We have confidence in our Heavenly Father who does all things for us. We have confidence in the fact that He has kept and reserved a place in heaven for you.

It's not a thought. That's part of your confidence today. You know that there's a place reserved. It's for you. It's your place. You know, sometimes when you go to a wedding, you will see your name at the table.

It's for you. Sometimes you go onto a train and you'll see lots of seats and it says reserved. And it means you can't go and sit there. It's reserved for somebody else.

Somebody who's booked it. And that's how it is in glory. There is a place reserved. It's for you. Your name is there.

Your name's in the Lamb's Book of Life. I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again and receive you unto myself. Isn't that wonderful? No wonder we have a confidence.

[22 : 17] But the apostle says, therefore, do not throw away your confidence. And one of the ways that we can throw away our confidence is replacing God confidence with self-confidence.

confidence. And that is something that happens too often in the life of the believer where we begin to trust ourselves.

And one of the times we're most likely to do it is when things are going well. And we say to ourselves, you know, I've been strong against temptation of late.

My prayer life has been good. I feel good as a Christian. temptation. And what you've forgotten is that up until this point you have been depending completely on the Lord.

Every day depending on Him. Depending upon Him in the face of temptation. Depending on Him to watch your tongue in what you say. Depending upon Him as you interact in all the different situations in life.

[23 : 19] All the time depending upon Him. And for some reason you begin to think that I'm managing. I'm doing well. And you take your foot off the spiritual pedal and you begin to trust yourself a wee bit.

Bang! You'll fall. It'll go. That is kind of throwing away our confidence. And when we do that we lose this sense of fellowship, this sense of communion that we have with the Lord.

It's like Peter walking on the water. Peter walked on the water as he looked at Jesus. Jesus, he was able to do so when Jesus filled his vision. And then Peter changed.

Peter began to sink. Why did he begin to sink? Because he started looking around. There might have been a time Peter says, whoa, look at what I'm doing. And then he began to look at the wind and he began to look at the waves and hear the blowing of the wind and he took his focus off Jesus and he began to sink.

His confidence in Christ had gone. And he began to sink. And it'll be the same for you and for me. The only way we can walk is by looking to Jesus.

[24 : 41] And again we throw away our confidence by our sin. Now of course we always sin but what I mean here is when we are deliberately sinning.

We do not anymore have the confidence in the Lord that we had when as it were the channels are open. You know if we are seeking to have a clear heart a clear conscience before the Lord it's a wonderful thing.

It gives us a confidence of coming into his presence. But if we are living in a sinful way that's gone. It's like for instance if you've wronged somebody if you did something really bad against somebody when you see that person coming you want to avoid them.

You don't want to meet them because you have a guilty conscience. It's the same as when you were maybe wee and you had done something wrong.

I remember I was always falling out of the trees and always tearing my clothes. I remember trying to get into the house so that my parents wouldn't see me.

[25 : 57] Get in and get changed and try and hide the evidence once more. You couldn't walk. Here's home. Normally you just breeze in. This is where I come. But now you're trying to slink in so that you won't be discovered.

Why? You've no confidence because you know that things have gone wrong. That's how it is with ourselves before the Lord.

If we are not living in a right way, if there are things wrong, if there's guilt in our heart, we don't have this confidence. We're throwing it away. So that's why it's so important that if there is anything, and I mean anything, even if we have something against a brother, as simple a thing as that, it's a great

blight.

If we have in our heart, if we're harboring things in our heart against somebody else, my friend, we will be throwing away our confidence.

If we are engaging in things that are wrong, that are displeasing to the Lord, then again this is affecting. And again another area that will, without a shadow of doubt, begin to rob us of this confidence, is if we spend all our time with our own people.

[27 : 26] It's very important that we experience the togetherness. Now, of course, in this world, we live and we mix and we are involved with all kinds of different people, and don't get me wrong in this.

But you know, the Bible tells us that iron sharpens iron. And it's important that we do have the fellowship and the company of God's people.

You see, for instance, a flock of sheep, and if you see a sheep on its own all the time, you'll say to yourself there's something wrong with that sheep. Sheep want the company, that's why they're a flock, they're always together.

They might be separate, they might be here and there for a little, but we're talking here long term. Straight away you say there's something wrong. And so it's important that there is this togetherness.

But then finally we just see the reason that we're not to throw away is that it has a great reward.

There's a reward in the here and now. There is great blessing in walking with our heavenly father.

[28 : 35] father. You have a feeling of fulfillment. You have an enjoyment in the faith. My friend let me ask you today are you enjoying being a Christian?

It's a very important question. And if you say no I am not then you have to ask yourself why? There could be loads of reasons.

And it's very easy to begin to point here and there and say well false with the minister. I'm not enjoying his preaching. Well my friend that's only a wee part of it if that's the case.

I've got to look at myself and say right what's wrong? Because God hasn't saved us to be miserable believers. He saved us in order to enjoy himself.

Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Not just enjoy him when we go into glory and into eternity but enjoy him here now. And if we're not enjoying him here now there's something wrong.

[29 : 43] What's wrong? We've got to ask ourselves this question and we've got to deal with it.

Sometimes it might be painful when we dig down when we go under the knife there might have to be surgery spiritual surgery but in order to enjoy as we should that's sometimes necessary.

So there are rewards here and now most obvious but also of course we know there is a reward ahead. Given that great welcome well done good and faithful servant brought into this inheritance that has been prepared for you before the foundation of this world.

Well my friend do you have this confidence in the Lord today? If not then I would urge you to deal with this because there's nothing greater to have in this world than to have this confidence in the living God.

Let us pray. O Lord our God we pray that we may have confidence in God. May we put our trust in the Lord.

Deliver us we pray from ourselves and from what we are in and of ourselves. May we look to the Lord entirely and may we focus upon him.

[31 : 14] May we enjoy all that he has given us and prepared for us and that we may find our lives being fulfilled in so many different ways.

O Lord do us good. Strengthen us and uphold us and keep us and take away from us all our sin. In Jesus name we ask it. Amen.