

Heb 10:31-39 Faithful Endurance

In vv. 26-31 we see a very serious warning to those who know the truth about the Son of God, and then turn away. And after recalling the great punishment in the desert that led to the death of an entire generation, he says in v. 29: **“How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?”** He is saying in the strongest language, *“Do not fall away. Do not neglect such a great salvation. But instead, press on. Persevere. Endure.”* And then, vv. 32-39 the author turns to words of assurance. Look at v. 39: **“But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.”** These words are also for us. No, we are not in danger of trusting the sacrificial system of Moses. But, the principle applies. There is always a danger for those who profess Christ to turn away, to drift away, from Christ and the living God. Brothers and sisters, I’ve seen so many come into the church and then leave. And so have you! And as I look at my own life, there is always this FIGHT against the world, against Satan, against my own sin. Nothing has changed since the fall of Adam. All of us have need for faithful endurance! These words are written for our help. All of us need both the warnings AND the encouragements to endure. Therefore, we need this message today to help us on our road to heaven. I have 3 truths from the text that will help us endure faithfully.

1. Remember the Faithfulness of God in the Past. Look at vv. 32-34: **“But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. 33 Sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. 34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property . . .”** Let me say upfront that this first truth is an implication from the text. It is a general truth found throughout the Bible. I think the emphasis here is for those Hebrew Christians to remember that they did endure in the earlier days when they were persecuted, and when they stood with others who were persecuted. He is saying, **“Remember your past. Remember your circumstances. Remember your sufferings. Remember your persecutions after you came to the faith. Remember that during those times, you endured.”** And remembering that you endured during those times will help you with your endurance NOW. This is the truth of the passage. But we must remember that the REASON we endure, the reason we persevere, the reason we stand is because of God’s faithfulness to us.

One of the reasons that Israel of the OT did not endure was because they did not remember the faithfulness of God as he worked in their lives. In Judges 8:33, just after Gideon died, we read: **“As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel turned again and whored after the Baals and made Baal-berith their god.”** They did not endure. Why would they choose 2nd rate pagan gods and slip back into idolatry. The answer is in v. 34: **“And the people of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hand of all their enemies on every side . . .”** Another example is Israel after they came out of Egypt. In Nehemiah 9:16-17 we read: **“But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments. They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them . . .”**

This is such an important truth for us! We must recall the faithfulness of God in the past, which will be the means God uses for our endurance today. In Ps. 63:6-7 King David says, **“When I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.”** I think of Is. 46:9: **“Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me . . .”** And, part of trusting in God’s faithfulness is to know that what God begins, He will finish. In 46:10 we read: **“declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose . . .”**

Now, let’s move forward to the NT. How do we know God will do what He says? As Christians, what do we do? Yes, we remember all the examples of the OT. Yes, we remember the ways God has worked in our lives. But, what displays God’s faithfulness in the past for Christians? It is the sending of the Son. Brothers and sisters, we are not like the OT believers, who lived before the cross. Yes, they saw great and mighty works. But there is no work of God like the sending of the Son. Look back at v. 32 and notice reason for their endurance. **“But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened . . .”** Enlightened about what? This is the gospel! They embraced, they received, they followed the Lord Jesus Christ. They didn’t just merely believe because of the works of God in their fathers or in the prophets; they had come to know the greatest work of God in the Son. Heb. 1:1: **“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son . . .”**

Brothers and sisters, the greatest work of God in your life is the Gospel of Jesus Christ! This means that when sickness or anxieties or bouts of depression or financial strains or hardships that grip all of us, or persecutions because of your faith in Christ, or difficulties with raising children or with relationships, or as you deal with your own sin, remember the great work of God in sending the Son. Know that in Him ALL your sins are forgiven. On the cross, He was your great sacrifice. The wrath and judgment for your sins fell on him. And now he lives. He rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of God where he reigns. Know that you are now under God’s new covenant. And, **“he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ”** (Phil. 1:6). **“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose”** (Rom. 8:28).

The word for “endured” is to “stand one’s ground.” I remember playing king of the hill as a kid. And who do you think wins that one most of the time. It is the biggest and strongest kid. But the Bible says we do not stand in our own strength. We do not endure on our own. Yes, we recall the works of God in past days in our own lives. But, the foundation of this the work of God in the faithfulness of God in sending the Son.

2. Remember the Faithfulness of God in the Present. The context of this passage is all about faithful endurance. When? In the PRESENT. They needed endurance in their time. We need endurance in our time. NOW! This is why all applications find their setting in your life NOW. When your loved one just passed, you need endurance NOW. When you are anxious about the future, you need endurance NOW. When your loved ones are not walking with the Lord, you need endurance NOW. When you await the doctor’s answer for tests, you need endurance NOW.

When you are depressed, you need endurance NOW. When you are unsure about the specifics of your future, you need endurance NOW. When you have doubts about your own salvation or the truths of the gospel, you need endurance, NOW. When you think is it all worth it, you need endurance, NOW. This same application of endurance is what every person of faith has needed from the fall of Adam. This is why in v. 38 he says, **“my righteous one shall live by faith.”** To have endurance is to have faith NOW in the present. Look at vv. 37-38: **“Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”**

These two verses are taken from Isaiah 26:20 and Hab. 2:3. In both of these passages the context is coming judgment upon the nations and Israel as a whole for their wickedness. This is why we read: **“Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay.”** At the same time, he says to the faithful in v. 38, **“but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”** Let’s take this back to the Hebrew Christians. Do you remember what was soon to come in their day? Well, in 66 A.D. Israel started a rebellion, a revolution, as they tried to gain independence from Rome. This began one of the worst 4-year periods of time in their history with, sickness, starvation, suffering and death. And at the end of 70 A.D., after all the strongholds and surrounding towns fell, so did Jerusalem and the great temple. This week I read an account of that war. It was horrible! I believe this is what the author is referring to by quoting Isaiah and Habakkuk. He knew this time was coming.

Do you remember Jesus telling his disciples that the temple would be destroyed. And they asked him about the time. And he said, **“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath . . .”** (Matt. 24).

In light of these words by Jesus, I believe the author is warning the Hebrews that **“in a little while, the coming one will come and will not delay.”** Therefore, *“the righteous will live by faith. Do not fall away. Be steadfast! Endure! God takes no pleasure in the one who falls away in times of trouble. Remember how you endured in the past and the faithfulness of God then. Nothing has changed! Press on!”* The principle is this: God’s people will live through times of judgment upon the nations. But, God will protect his people, those who live by faith. Does this mean Christians do not die during such times? NO. But, our souls are found in Christ! And He will work **“ALL THINGS”** for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose! Also, we must keep in mind, that all the judgments of God throughout history in his providence and in his timing are but shadows of the final coming of the Lord Jesus.

So how does this apply to us? It applies the same way. The principle is still the same. As long a sin remains in this world, and in our own hearts and in our families . . . And as long as the enemy is on the prowl as a roaring lion in this world (1 Pet. 5:8), as long as the judgments of God upon the nations continue, WE HAVE NEED OF ENDURANCE. And this will not end until the Lord Jesus comes! We must remember the faithfulness of God now. God is making history NOW . . .

as He is working his will in this world. And though we may see his will as “delay,” there is no delay with Him. He may deliver you physically from your current situation. He may not! As we will see in cp. 11, many of the faithful lived as heroes. Many of the faithful died as heroes. But all of them endured. Brothers and sisters, God will not leave you nor forsake you! Therefore, you can endure! This brings us to our last truth for this morning.

3. Know that God will Keep His Promise. This is really the point of the passage. This is the kicker. This is the key to endurance NOW for the person of faith. YES, we must look back to God’s faithfulness in the past. YES, we must know that God is faithful now. But, there is no hope if we do not have something to look forward to. Without this hope we will not endure. Therefore, this passage teaches us to look FORWARD to the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise. Look at vv. 35-36: **“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.”** Here, the author reminds those Hebrews and us that God is faithful to keep his promise. Look back at 10:23: **“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”** Brothers and sisters, the reward of your faithfulness is the fulfillment of God’s promise. And your faithfulness NOW is evidence of your faith. It is proof that you are doing the will of God. And what is the will of God? It is to fear Him. It is to trust in Him. It is to love Him. It is to “walk in him.” It is to obey him. It is to pursue Him above all earthly pleasures. It is to “renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age” . . .” (Tit. 2:12) And, in our context . . . here . . . it is to endure hardships.

For us this means that TODAY we endure in this sinful world because God is faithful to keep his promise. And by doing so, we endure NOW. Sneak peak forward to cp. 11. This is the author’s point. Why did Abel offer a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain? Why did Enoch live godly in an ungodly world? Why did Noah build a huge boat? Why did Abraham leave his home to enter a foreign land? Why did Abraham, when he was tested, offer Isaac on the altar? Why did Jacob . . . way down in Egypt . . . bless the sons of Joseph? Why did Joseph tell his children to take his bones back to Canaan? Why did Moses forsake the riches of Egypt to suffer with his people?

In his book *Future Grace*, John Piper tells a story about a young French girl in the 17th century who was put in prison for her faith as a French Huguenot. All she had to do was renounce her faith in Christ. She chose to resist. And along with 30 other women she was put into a tower by the sea for 38 years. And tourists today can still see the word “resist” scratched into the wall of the tower. Can you imagine sitting there for 38 years as your body changes from a young 14-year-old into an old woman. Why? Look over at 11:36-38 **“Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted mistreated—38 of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”** Why? Look at v. 39: **“And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”** Again? Why? The key is found in v. 38: **“of whom the world was not worthy.”** As Christians we see and we know that the ONLY thing, the ONLY ONE worthy, the ONLY ONE who has infinite value . . . is God himself. And He is our reward! And He has promised to give Himself!

In Gen. 15:1 God says to Abraham: **“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward”** (KJV, NIV). God says the same to the priests of the OT. Did you know that the tribe of Levi, the priests, were given no inheritance in the land. In Deut. 18:2 we read **“They shall have no inheritance among their brothers . . .”** Why is this? The rest of the verse gives the answer: **“the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them.”** In the NT, Peter says about us: **“You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”** And he says: **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession . . .”** (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

Brothers and sisters, the promise that God will give Himself to his people is the greatest motive for our endurance. Just this morning I read in Lam. 3:21-26: **“But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.” The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.”** There is no greater motive. And if you are a Christian today, you know what I’m talking about. You know the faithfulness of God in Christ. And you wait for your reward.

Let me end with some applications.

Application: The Will of God for your life is faithful endurance . . . NOW in this life as you remember how He has worked in your life and in the examples of others in the past. And, as you know that God works NOW in your life, whether he comes to deliver you in your current circumstance or not. And finally, know that God will fulfill his promise to save you and do everything else He has promised in the Word.

Application: This also means that those who do not do the will of God are those who *“shrink back and are destroyed.”* Therefore, do not shrink back. Do not fall away. Do not drift away from the faith.

Application: Be patient! Walk in faithfulness! Your words from the Lord Jesus will be **“Well done good and faithful servant.”** Life is short and full troubles. But, be faithful! God has promised. He is faithful! And He will fulfill all his promises. There is a final salvation that awaits. And what is your reward! Is it heaven! Yes. Is it a city! Yes. Is it peace forevermore! Yes. Will your tears be wiped away! Yes. Will your struggle with sin finish! Yes. Will you see your loved ones who have gone before! Yes. Will you have a new body! Yes. But, you know what . . . these things are only the preliminaries to your greatest reward! And what is this reward? It is God Himself . . . in the person of Jesus Christ! All those other rewards only flow down from who HE is. God is your reward!

Application: What waits for you in heaven cannot compare to the sufferings of this life.

Application: There is always the tension of “now” but “not yet.”

Application: Our joy in this world comes from knowing we have a better possession.

Application: The things of this life can be taken, but not what God holds for us in heaven. Therefore, hold the things of this world loosely. Do not be afraid to lose them. You can't take them with you!