

Sermon Transcript

05.31.2026

Hebrews 10:32-39

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- Good morning! Please open to Hebrews 10. We'll be in vss. 32-39.
- As you do, think back to last week. What did we celebrate 6 days ago? Anyone remember what we will celebrate 6 days from today? We're situated precisely between Memorial Day and D-Day.
- Last week we remembered those who gave their lives in battle, next week we remember the decisive turning point of WW2.
- So let's talk about D-Day, June 6, 1944. The Allies strike a decisive victory at Normandy that leads to the eventual inevitable surrender of Nazi Germany.
- But imagine that the Allies had won at Normandy & instead of marching to Berlin, just given up and gone home. They've done the real hard part, but they just decide to pack it in & bail on the war. Does anyone think the French would have finished the job? What would have happened had American and British troops simply let the Russians have all the final glory? I imagine the past century of global politics would have played out somewhat differently.
- That didn't happen, but such a scenario isn't too hard to imagine considering the attrition we witness as any given war wears on.
- We've seen a pattern play out time & again whereby initial enthusiasm is eventually eclipsed by cynicism, disillusionment, & fatigue. Anticipation succumbs to apathy & later outright antagonism. We even have a name for that phenomenon. Its called war weariness/fatigue.
- Think about how historically fired up we have been with the early stages of nearly any given conflict. The initial fight against communism had men like my 17 year old grandfather begging to enlist early to fight in Korea, but by the time of Vietnam, men that age were running to Canada.
- And even the Vietnam conflict itself showed this war of attrition in which less than 1/4 of the public thought the war a mistake in 1965 vs. about 2/3 who viewed it that way by 1971, which is why this trend is also sometimes called the Vietnam syndrome.
- Or when America invaded Iraq in 03, about 75% of the country supported that cause. Today, only around 30% agree with that effort. Obviously some of that particular example is due to suspicion over the original official narrative of WMDs, but it still highlights this historical trend.
- Much of the initial passion & patriotism of Iraq & Afghanistan lingered as a result of our proximity to 9/11. In those early days after the attack, the country was unified as seldom before. The NY fire and police departments were seen as national heroes, 15 years later, people are calling to defund the police. And all through the States, bumper stickers, billboards & posters reminded us to never forget. Yet today, we have a Muslim mayor in that very city.
- And this sequence of erosion and decline isn't limited to war. You start a new job with a sense of eagerness and excitement that eventually ebbs. Your house, your car, your education, your marriage, we see the same phenomena playing out in nearly every area of life in which we're prone to begin with zeal, but eventually run out of steam.
- We've all experienced the downstream effects of attrition in some area of life.
- And that's what Hebrews is concerned with as well. As we'll see in our text today, these believers had an initial passion and fervor, but persecution and suffering had exhausted their reserves and threatened their resolve.

- Perhaps you can relate. You get saved and you're eager to read the Bible, eager to attend church, you're "on fire for the Lord." But perhaps over time that fire has begun to burn a little colder. You've made a few "tiny compromises." Your passion wanes, your zeal tempers, and, if you aren't careful, you begin to drift.
- We too are in need of endurance. So let's pray that the Lord will use this passage to restore in us a deep longing and passion for Christ and His word and a subsequent endurance.
- Self, others, me.
- Christ is better. Better than porn. Better than divorce. Better than drugs. Better than money and bitterness and escape. He's better than your reputation and comfort. Christ is better. Every sin is an attack on Christ's supremacy.
- But in the context of Hebrews, Christ's preeminence is particularly aimed at His superiority to the shadows of the Old Covenant.
- If Christ is better, why would we drift, why fall away? Why go back to what is inferior?
- That's the concern for the book.
- In the New covenant we have something that was utterly impossible under the administration of the old covenant, the Mosaic Covenant. Namely, we have access.
- Under the Mosaic Law, God was inaccessible, unapproachable. The blood of bulls and goats and the sacrifices of sinful priests couldn't atone and thus the altar was closed, entry into the holy of holies was barred. God's wrath wasn't actually propitiated, He simply passed over former sins in anticipation of the efficacy and sufficiency of His Son.
- Those OT sacrifices didn't actually atone, but rather illustrated a preview or picture of a future fulfillment.
- And since they didn't actually offer grounds for forgiveness, God's presence was cordoned off and the people were separated from their Creator by a series of courtyards and curtains and cherubim in the tabernacle and temple.
- But, because Christ is better, we now have access. What was impossible under Moses is now commanded in Christ. Because Christ is a better priest who has offered a better sacrifice in a better sanctuary on the basis of better promises of a better covenant, therefore, we're beckoned to draw near. That's the overarching message of Hebrews.
- God is therefore accessible through Christ, in Christ, by Christ. And this would have been of particular comfort in the context of the 1st century audience of Hebrew Christians.
- As we'll see in our passage today, they're facing persecution, suffering for their confession of faith and in need of a word of encouragement.
- So through Hebrews, we've seen a consistent pattern. We've seen a command to draw near, followed by a warning about the dangers of falling away, followed by a reassuring word of encouragement. That three-step repetition of command, warning, and promise plays out multiple times in the book.
- As we've said, we need both commands & encouragements, we need both threats & promises, both carrot & stick. God has given us law & gospel so that we might hold fast & draw near.
- And now in chapter 10, we're in the final step of that sequence once again.
- In vss 19-25, we were commanded to draw near and hold fast.
- In 26-31, we were warned of the dangers of drifting.
- And in our passage today, we'll find a word of comfort and assurance.
- Let's begin in vss. 32-33.

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 sometimes being partners with those so treated. (Hebrews 10:32–33)

- We ended last time with a warning that it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Lest we presume upon His grace, we're reminded that God will not be mocked. His wrath and judgment are as true as His love and grace.
- And yet notice how vs. 32 begins.
- But. But is an important biblical word.
- In Ephesians we read that we were dead in our sins, by nature children of wrath, but God...
- In Genesis Joseph says: you meant evil, but God meant good.
- Or as Lamentations 3 says
 - *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."* (Lamentations 3:21–24)
- That but is the difference between confidence and discouragement, hope and despair.
- This contrastive conjunction carries a lot of weight. Here in Hebrews 10 it functions to assure God's people that they are not subject to the wrath that has just been mentioned.
- It IS a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, BUT God's children needn't worry about that. Those who shrink back will be destroyed, BUT we aren't those who shrink back as we'll read later.
- We saw the same kind of argument in chapter 6. After warning about the danger of falling away, the author pivots and writes
 - *Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.* (Hebrews 6:9)
- As we've seen in the book, falling away is a symptom of unbelief and perseverance a sign of faith.
- How do you know that someone is elect? By their perseverance. How do you know if someone will persevere? Because they're elect. Perseverance is the sure sign of God's election for those whom He foreknows, He predestines and those whom He predestines He calls and those whom He calls He justifies and those whom He justifies He glorifies as Paul writes in Romans.
- So the whole book of Hebrews is an encouragement to believe. To believe that Christ is better.
- And to bolster that belief, the author says to recall. To remember. To call to mind the past.
- Remembering is a powerful spiritual exercise. Throughout the OT, Israel is regularly called to remember the works of YHWH. And in the NT, we have admonitions to remember. And in the Lord's supper, Christ commands we do it in remembrance of Him. We are prone to forget. Prone to wander as the hymn says. One of the strategies of the enemy is to give us spiritual amnesia so we need to cultivate the gift of recollection.
- Most of us don't have steel traps when it comes to memory. When we hear a name we need to take active steps to remember it. When we read Scripture, it takes work to memorize it.
- So the call is recall isn't a passive response. The author is calling us to engage our minds. Fix our attention on the past. Fight to remember.
- Here in particular, it's referring to the past sufferings that these believers had experienced.
- For months now, we've mentioned the historical context of persecution that undergirds the setting of Hebrews. This passage is one of the places where we see it explicitly.
- The suffering doesn't seem to have advanced to martyrdom. We'll read in chapter 12

- *In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.* (Hebrews 12:4)
- So they aren't being killed, but they ARE being persecuted. And this theme will become a major motif of the next couple of chapters. Chapter 11 will talk about the sufferings of the saints who have gone before and chapter 12 will talk about suffering as a form of God's discipline towards His children. So don't miss the pivot here in the text.
- This probably isn't official imperial persecution. By & large most of the 1st century persecution of Christians was either by Jews frustrated at the threat of the church and the implication that Judaism was therefore bankrupt or at the hands of local citizens & local governments, frustrated by the cultural upheaval that Christianity presented. The different sexual mores, the opposition to infanticide, the suppression of idolatry, & so forth. That's why in Acts 19, there's a riot in Ephesus as the craftsmen recognize the threat to their business that Christianity represents.
- Interestingly enough, the only Pauline epistle to not describe conflict with the surrounding culture is 1 Cor because the church at Corinth had absorbed so many of cultural customs & assumptions that it wasn't functioning as salt & light & thus wasn't a threat to the world.
- So afflictions are to be expected and therefore, not only is suffering not a reason to fall away, its all the more reason to draw near.
- So let's look at what the author writes:
- He mentions a hard struggle with sufferings.
- That word struggle is *athlesis* from which we get the word athlete. That's not just a random fact. Rather, it will help to understand the athletic imagery that pervades the text.
- For instance,
 - *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...* (Hebrews 12:1)
- The point of the imagery is that the pain is purposeful. The burn you feel while running, the sore muscles after lifting, the early mornings, the restricted diet, all of that is aimed towards a goal, a prize, a reward.
- This athletic imagery permeates the NT. For instance,
 - *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.* (1 Corinthians 9:24–27)
 - *An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.* (2 Timothy 2:5)
- As an athlete disciplines him or herself for a goal, so God disciplines His people for holiness.
- As we'll read in Hebrews 12
 - *For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.* (Hebrews 12:11)
- So when it comes to persecution in particular & suffering in general, God is doing something in that. He's working all things together for good. He doesn't waste any of our tears or cries.
- So these Christians had suffered. Sometimes even being publicly exposed which is the word *theatrizo*, from which we get the English word theater. Like athletes in a stadium, gladiators in the coliseum, or Roosevelt's man in the arena, their suffering was broadcast.
- Publicly exposed to what? To affliction and reproach.
- But like the athlete's sweat and blood, so the suffering is redemptive and sanctifying.

- The great danger to our faith isn't suffering, its complacency and apathy and resignation, its the temptation that accompanies suffering. Its when we fail to have a proper theology of suffering. So many evangelicals lack a biblical worldview so that when pain strikes, they don't have a proper category and they try to figure it out along the way. They aren't prepared though the Bible consistently says to not be surprised by suffering.
- Evangelicals don't often think of understanding affliction as being of utmost importance to our faith, but for the apostles, suffering was part of discipleship 101. We see it in 1 Peter and James and when Paul's ministry in Acts is summarized it says he was:
 - *strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:22)*
- Godliness without suffering is like salvation without discipleship.
- And in 1 Thessalonians Paul writes:
 - *that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction... (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4)*
- How different American Christianity would be if presented in biblical terms in which discipleship is a call to die and sanctification a call to suffer.
- But affliction is always easier to withstand on the front end. It gets harder over time so that's why Hebrews says to recall, to remember.
- Not only were they willing to suffer themselves, but to suffer alongside others. To share in the sufferings of others, being partners with those so treated. Rather than *keeping their heads down*, they had shown up & spoken up to show solidarity w/ their suffering brothers & sisters.
- So again, we see the centrality of community in the Christian life. We are to weep with those who weep, to bear one another's burdens. It's sad how often those who are suffering tend to drift from the church when in reality suffering should draw us together in mutual service and love.
- As an example of that shared suffering, let's look at vs. 34.

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. (Hebrews 10:34)

- Look at the word compassion. In Greek, that's *sympatheo*, from which we get the word sympathy. That word occurs only one other time in the NT and it just so happens to be in Hebrews. We saw it back in chapter 4
 - *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)*
- So Christ sympathizes with us and we should sympathize with each other. That's the idea. We are members of His body and members of one another. Christ's compassion is the model and motivation for our compassion toward one another.
- In other words, a centralization of the kingdom implies a centralization of the church community, a deep commitment, a covenant, a solidarity.
- In chapter 13, he'll return to this idea when he writes this:
 - *Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. (Hebrews 13:3)*
- Notice that final phrase since you also are in the body. That's the same argument that Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 12. Why the eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of you.

- You'll never appreciate the church to the extent that you should until you understand the body imagery of Scripture. Until you believe that the men and women sitting around you have been given to you and you to them for your mutual good. That you belong to each other as a consequence of your belonging to Christ.
- And this is particularly instructive for those of us who have a high view of God's sovereignty. At the end of the day, I think a lot of people think of church in a very Arminian consumeristic way. I chose this church and I can therefore opt out whenever I so choose. When I get bored or disappointed or frustrated. When my preferences aren't being met, I'm out.
- But what does Paul say in 1 Corinthians 12:18
 - *But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. (1 Corinthians 12:18)*
- Notice who does the arrangement. Notice who is in charge. Notice who chooses.
- In other words, if you don't like the body, take that up with the Lord. He's the head of the body. And He's given you the community that He has according to His sovereign wisdom.
- Of course sometimes the body is so diseased that you need to amputate yourself, but that's the exception that proves the rule.
- I'm focusing on this because of how important community is for our perseverance and how important covenant is to community.
- As an illustration, consider the Navy SEAL training process. The initial stage is called BUDS, basic underwater demolition seals. Everyone who enrolls in BUDS is eager & zealous to be a member of the team. But only about 10% of those who start make it all the way to the teams. Why is that? Because its hard. Because it hurts. Because its designed to weed out those who can quit.
- So, there are two main factors in observing who will persevere.
- First, those who make it are those who don't allow themselves to consider quitting. In short, it just isn't a true choice, not an option. Its much more difficult to choose something if you don't think of that thing as an option. BTW, I'd encourage you to think the same way about marriage. So many marriages fail because failure is an option. Well, if you give yourself an out, the flesh will actively seek out ways to take advantage of that. And the same is true of church community. If community isn't covenantal, if its contractual, there will always be an opportunity for the flesh to get going when the going gets rough.
- So the first characteristic of making it through BUDS is an unwillingness or even inability to give up and quit. The second factor of those who make it is a team orientation. Those who try to lone Ranger it won't make it. The program is designed to force synergy and community. After all, you are joining something called the teams so if you don't demonstrate a commitment to teamwork, you won't survive. And the same is true of the Christian. An isolated member is easier to pick off, but a cohesive church is a formidable force.
- God has designed for His people to persevere, but He's given us means to aid in that preservation and one of the chief aids is the church which we neglect to our own detriment.
- So these early Christians exemplified a concern for the body. Now, we don't know exactly how they showed compassion to those on prison, but the point is that they did.
- And this is interesting in that if you look at the gospels, Jesus gives a long list of what His followers will do for each other. Look at Matthew 25:35-36
 - *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. (Matthew 25:35-36)*

- You probably recall that the righteous said, we don't remember doing any of that and Jesus responds, as you did it for my people, you did it to me. What I find fascinating about this is that each of these actions find parallel in Jewish literature. You can find the prophets for instance talking about feeding the hungry and helping the sick, but there is very little if any corresponding call to visit those in prison in any Jewish literature. In fact, that kind of became a distinguishing characteristic of Christianity in the early church and highlights the radical sense of fellowship experienced within the church. Christians were marked by certain countercultural activities such as taking in infants that had been abandoned and staying behind in plagues to nurse the sick, and caring for widows and inmates.
- So there was compassion for prisoners, but not only that, they also joyfully accepted the plundering of their property which I'll confess, from a human point of view, I don't understand.
- If someone takes my truck & home, joy isn't my innate response. I'm more prone to the 2nd amendment than the 2nd greatest commandment in that instance. But that's because I'm thinking too myopically.
- As we'll see in chapter 11, Scripture is full of examples of people who suffered the loss of possessions and privileges for the sake of better reward and who joyfully bore the loss.
- Which means that the ability to endure this hardship is rooted in perspective. Experiencing joy when someone plunders your possessions may not be natural, but it is natural if there's a greater reward. God has hardwired us to seek reward and we have a new nature that is able to perceive the superior reward that is offered in the gospel.
- Our problem isn't that we seek a reward, its that our vision is too small. We trade an eternal heavenly reward for an earthly temporal reward as Christ says in the sermon on the mount. As C.S. Lewis writes
 - "It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." (C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory)
- Imagine you're driving around Austin and a guy asks if he can have your car. Most of us would obviously say no. But now imagine that guy is Elon Musk and in return for your car, he'll give you a Cybertruck and 10 million dollars. The equation has changed now. What was previously counter-intuitive is now perfectly reasonable. In fact, you'd be a fool to say no.
- Well, that's how these believers were able to experience joy when they were plundered. Because they believed that there is a reward associated with suffering. It doesn't take faith to seek a reward, it takes faith to believe that there is a better reward to seek. As Christ says in the sermon on the Mount.
 - *Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.* (Matthew 5:11-12)
- That's why James will write:
 - *Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds...* (James 1:2)
- If there were no reward, there would be no joy, but reward is definitional to our faith. Look at how chapter 11 will describe faith:
 - *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* (Hebrews 11:6)
- Notice the two elements: not only do we believe that God exists, but that He rewards.

- They were able to joyfully accept the plundering of their possessions because of a better possession, an abiding one.
- Both of those words are important.
- It is better. This fits with the theme of the book in which Christ is better. Hebrews talks about a better hope, better covenant, better promises, better priesthood, better sacrifice, better blood, better reward, better home, and a better resurrection.
- Not only is the possession better, but abiding.
- This points to the difference between the transient fleeting nature of the shadow vs. the remaining eternal nature of the substance. As we've mentioned before, the Mosaic covenant offered long life in the land. Contrast that with eternal life in the new creation.
- Or as Christ says, don't seek the kind of reward that will rust and perish and can be stolen, but seek what is heavenly and secure.
- That's the better and abiding possession. One which chapter 12 says can't be shaken and can't be taken from us.
- Let's keep going. Vss. 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.
(Hebrews 10:35–36)

- As we mentioned a couple of weeks ago, the work of Christ has given us objective confidence. Christ Himself is our confidence. But at the same time, we are to labor to attain greater subjective confidence.
- That's not contradiction, that's *paradox, mystery*, an example of *theological tension*. We need to strive for something we already have. We're to become what we are. That's NT sanctification.
- We're to hold fast, draw near & not neglect meeting together. These are means that God has given so that we might exercise confidence which is like a muscle that can atrophy if not used.
- The author says, don't throw away your confidence. Which raises the question: how do we throw away our confidence?
- Well, consider how you waste your spiritual strength. Don't eat healthy, don't work out and you'll wither and weaken.
- Likewise, confidence diminishes by neglect. We neglect the means of grace that God has given us to bolster our faith & as a result, confidence shrinks. In other words, spiritual sloth. We neglect the church & the preaching of the word & the reading of the word & prayer & confession, we fail to remember & recall God's promises, we indulge the flesh, and so forth. In short, we drift. Apostasy is never a sudden decision, it's the culmination of a prolonged season of negligence.
- So confidence is both a gift and a responsibility. It's a gift of God, entirely by grace, but it's also something which we must labor and fight to preserve.
- As Philippians 2:12-13 says
 - *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* (Philippians 2:12–13)
- And if we are to not throw away our confidence, we need endurance, especially when trials aren't abating.

- That's what the book of Hebrews is commending. Endurance. Perseverance. Holding fast. And again, think about how that plays out in the physical realm. If you want to increase your endurance you need to exercise. The same is true spiritually as well. Those of you who have suffered know that the more that you've suffered and seen God's faithfulness, the stronger your confidence in His provision. Your actual standing before God doesn't ebb and flow according to your obedience, but your experience of that relationship certainly does.
- The more your confidence is stretched, the stronger it grows.
- And it's stretched as you endure and do the will of God. What is the will of God? Here the context suggests that it's holding fast and drawing near. But in general, we could say that the test of endurance is obedience to God.
- We used the image in earlier chapters in talking about Christ's experience of suffering that He felt temptation to a degree that we have not because He never acquiesced.
- Think about doing a dead hang. You hang from a bar and the longer you hang, the more pain you feel, the more temptation there is to let go. Well, Christ never let go. He endured to the very end. So rather than Christ experiencing less suffering, He actually experienced more. Because He never felt the temporary release that sin offers.
- Each time we sin, we're letting go in a sense. But each time we resist, we boost our endurance. So we need to build up our spiritual energy, grow in the grace and strength of the gospel.
- Now, there are two errors that this talk of obedience brings up. One is to say that we can obey apart from the gospel, apart from grace. That's Pelagianism, that's legalism, that's self-righteousness. In reality, we can do absolutely nothing good apart from grace.
- But the opposite error is to say that because Christ has done everything therefore we do nothing. That sells books and attracts a crowd, but that isn't the message of the Bible. You have need of endurance. God is the sole origin and author of that endurance. And yet in His mysterious sovereignty, He has determined to grant that endurance through our efforts as we work out our salvation with fear and trembling.
- So where does this confidence and endurance come from? We'll see that in vss. 37-38.

For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." (Hebrews 10:37-38)

- Notice the righteous one shall live by what? Faith.
- This is a conflation of two OT passages. First, the phrase a little while comes from Isaiah 26 while the rest comes from Habakkuk 2.
- Both passages speak of waiting for the Lord in times of distress in which God will eventually deliver His people and judge His enemies.
- In both prophetic books, it appears as though evil has triumphed and yet the Lord is sovereignly superintending the suffering. As we see throughout Scripture, though the sorrow last for the night, what comes in the morning? Joy.
- But how do we attain that joy? Through faith. Through faith in the promises of God.
- Faith is the ability to see through the suffering, to see God's sovereignty and goodness in spite of the circumstances. To see through eschatological lenses, the lenses of God's providence.
- So when will this vindication and victory be revealed? The author writes of when the coming one will come. And that's interesting because it isn't a direct quote of Habakkuk.
- Habakkuk says IT will come. Hebrews says, HE will come. A coming one will come.
- IOW, Hebrews 10 isn't a verbatim reference to the OT, but is instead a messianic interpretation. The answer of WHEN salvation comes depends on answering the WHO of salvation.

- Who is this coming one? Well, that language is used throughout the Old and New Testaments in two ways. First, for God Himself. He is the one to come. But second of the messiah, the Christ, the anointed one. As John the Baptist says, one who comes after me.
- So when salvation comes is tied to when Christ comes because Christ Himself is our salvation.
- And that calls for faith. Faith that He will come. Faith that His coming will be decisive. Faith that all things will be made new, that all that is sad will be untrue. Faith that believes that God rewards those who seek Him which will be the focus of all of chapter 11, which presents a litany of those who trusted God in the midst of unfulfilled promises, a hall of faith so to speak.
- So there are two potential paths, the path of faith that leads to life and the path of shrinking back that leads to destruction. That phrase shrink back denotes hesitation, withdrawal, suppression. In military contexts, its used for retreat. So these are the two responses to crisis, the two reactions to suffering. We can either view our suffering as ultimate and give in to despair or we can view God's grace as ultimate and be filled with hope in the midst of the hardship.
- Either your circumstances are sovereign or God is.
- In other words, faith is able to see that the apparent victory of evil is only apparent, superficial. Faith sees through the façade of sufferings supremacy because it recognizes that there can by definition be only one who is supreme. And if Christ is supreme then evil and suffering and persecution and pain and death and despair aren't. If Christ is eternal, then affliction is not.
- So if you have this faith, then it inevitably manifests in faithfulness. Faithfulness to hold fast and persevere and draw near. By definition, truth faith works and endures. If it doesn't work and doesn't endure, then its something besides saving faith. Yes, there can be seasons of sluggishness and sin, but God's warning is the means by which we are awakened from that slumber so that we might take hold of what has taken hold of us.
- Let's keep going. Vs. 39.

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. (Hebrews 10:39)

- Now we see one more assurance, one more promise. Who are Christians? They are the elect, who by definition persevere.
- We believe in the perseverance of the saints, but Christians persevere because God preserves them and He preserves them through the means which He sovereignly supplies. He preserves them through His promises and warnings taking root and bearing fruit in our lives.
- We are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but rather those of faith and true faith endures.
- Again, this mirrors the language of the warning of Hebrews 6 which pivots in vs. 9 to say this:
 - *Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. (Hebrews 6:9)*
- BTW, notice the strength of the danger that is being contrasted here. Shrinking back leads to what? Destruction. I've mentioned before that some people read these passages as if the only danger that is in view is the loss of rewards. In fact, some people say that you can confess Christ, live a life of utter faithlessness and even renounce Christ and all that you'll suffer is a loss of rewards. You can have this world and the next, you can love sin and Christ.
- That's not what the text is saying though. There is more at stake than heavenly rewards, heaven itself is at stake. The choice here between shrinking and enduring is the choice between life and death, joy and destruction.

- And that provides another perspective to inspire endurance. Earlier the author encouraged us to recall the past. Now, we are stirred up to consider the future in the form of our eschatological destination. Both the past & future grace of God are gifts to encourage present faithfulness on our part.
- Now, as we begin to wrap this up, it's common to approach this and similar texts by asking how they help to answer the question of whether or not a Christian can lose their salvation, and we've talked about that a number of times over the past few months, but that isn't really the question that Hebrews is intended to address.
- Rather, the question is how has God prepared His people to persevere? What are the evidences of election? What are the means of preservation? What does preserving faith look like?
- This is similar to John's first epistle in which the apostle writes that Christians are marked by certain theological, moral, and social markers. How do you know that you've been born again? Well, in the context of 1 John, there is a baseline confession of orthodoxy, there is a genuine repentance toward sin and desire for godliness, and there is an authentic and sacrificial love for others. Not perfect theology or repentance or love, but where those are lacking, we should be concerned, not condemned, but concerned and convicted.
- Likewise, Hebrews is showing us what true persevering faith looks like. It draws near, it holds fast, it clings to the superiority of Christ, it embraces the community, the congregation, the church. It sacrifices for and serves others. When trouble arises, it runs toward rather than away from Christ and His body. It withstands the pressures and pains of the world and stands firm on the conviction that Christ is better.
- We began this morning with a reminder to remember. To recall.
- Life is like a river flowing toward disorder and distraction and even destruction. And unless you remember where you've been and where you're going, you'll drift.
- So God gives us His word that we might believe, that we might trust, and in doing so persevere and hold fast. There's nothing novel in this message, nothing terribly creative or innovative, just a simple reminder that Jesus is better and therefore worthy of our attention and affection.
- In John 16, Christ says:
 - *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* (John 16:33)
- Therefore Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4
 - *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* (2 Corinthians 4:16–18)
- This is what we believe and therefore how we persevere, how we endure the slights and strains of this fallen world.
- So let me ask whether your affection has waned, your eagerness to confess your sins, your anticipation of the weekly gathering, your desire to read the Bible, your passion for prayer, your delight in obedience, your hope and confidence and joy. Have they faded?
- If so, don't give in to the apathy, fight the drift, remember the way your faith once felt, remember God's past faithfulness & reflect upon God's future promises, take hold of what is yours in Christ.
- We are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.
- Let's pray.

Communion

- Fence table
- In communion, we are commanded to eat and drink in remembrance of Christ's death.
- And we've mentioned before that the Lord's supper is a multi-faceted sacrament.
- It calls us to introspection as we consider ourselves, but also calls us to look outward and consider Christ.
- It calls us to remember the past, but also to look to a future meal in which we will partake, called the wedding supper of the Lamb.
- And it calls us to consider our communion with God, but also with each other. That's why the meal was originally instituted with a common cup and common loaf. That wasn't incidental, that was essential to the very meaning of the meal.
- As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:17
 - *Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.* (1 Corinthians 10:17)
- So as this meal was given to strengthen our love for Christ, so it is given to strengthen our love for His body, for each other.
- That's why Paul writes
 - *For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.* (1 Corinthians 11:29)
- Notice that 1 Corinthians 11 doesn't just command us to examine ourselves, but to discern the body. Consider the church.
- So I want to give you a second to do just that. To ask yourself whether you think of church as a place you go or a people to whom you belong? Whether you are spending yourself for the sake of others. Whether you know and love the men and women around you or you are content on the periphery? Whether you have imbibed the individualistic consumeristic spirit of the age or you are walking in a deepening desire to know and be known?
- To ask yourself if you need to confess and repent of judgmentalism, discontentment, apathy or whatever.
- So take a second to consider the body and then we'll partake together.
- On the night...