

Endurance by Faith

Hebrews 10:32-39

Halifax: 25 June 2023

Introduction:

Today we will continue in Hebrews.

- This wonderful letter has presented to us the sweet excellence of Christ our Saviour.
 - The first ten and a half chapters show us that He is a High Priest like no other.
 - He is entirely without sin.
 - He is filled with compassion and so is eager to help us.
 - He is the Son of God and so lives forever with an eternal priesthood.
 - He is able to save us to the uttermost because He ever lives to make intercession for us.
 - He has the only sacrifice that can take away our sin.
 - He is seated at God's right hand and so has all authority in heaven and earth.
 - At 10:19, we came to the second part of Hebrews, where we are exhorted to respond to this great Saviour as we ought.
 - In 10:19-25, we saw that since He restores us to God by His saving work,
 - We ought to come near with boldness, resting in Jesus saving work...
 - We ought to hold on to our confession without wavering despite challenges...
 - We ought to consider one another so that we help each other to press on.
 - And we ought to be faithful about going to church.
 - Last week in 10:26-31, we looked at the atrocity of rejecting Him.
 - It is atrocious because it leaves you entirely without hope.
 - It is atrocious because it is such a wicked thing to do.
 - It is atrocious because it will incur God's most severe vengeance.
 - Today we are going to look at the role of faith (or confidence) when it comes to endurance (going on with the Lord).
 - I. First, we will consider how faith helped us to endure when we first believed.
 - II. Second, we will consider how much we need faith now so we can endure now.
 - III. Third, we will see how important it is for us to endure in faith.

Now for our Scripture reading.

- It is Hebrew 10:32-39. This is the word of God. May He bless this reading.

Hebrews 10:32-39: But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: ³³ partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; ³⁴ for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves

in heaven. ³⁵ Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ³⁷ "For yet a little while, *and* He who is coming will come and will not tarry. ³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith; but if *anyone* draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." ³⁹ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Thanks be to God for His holy and infallible Word.

God has revealed to us great things about Jesus Christ as the One He sent to save His people from their sins.

- When God has given such a wonderful testimony of Him, we ought to believe it.
- We ought to have strong confidence in this Saviour that God has appointed because there is no one else like Him—no one else who can save us from our sins.
- This passage is given to encourage us to have confidence in Him.

I. First, you are instructed to remember how your confidence in Him helped you when you first believed.

A. Verse 32 says: recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:

1. *Illumination* refers to the time when we first believed, when we came to understand that Christ was the Saviour we must have to be saved from our sins.
 - Some of you were illuminated when you were little children—and with child like faith and confidence, you trusted in Christ without question.
 - Others of you came to trust in Him after living in the darkness, and for you, you came to see—whether gradually or all at once—that He was the One.
2. It is the way of God, when we are first enlightened, to immediately put our faith to the test.
 - Pastors expect this with new converts.
 - The testing comes in the form of sufferings new believers must endure if they are to go on with Christ.
 - As it says, **“you endured a great struggle with sufferings.”**
 - Our text mentions several kinds of suffering that are often experienced.
 - First, new converts are often singled out for scrutiny and criticism—**made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations (v. 2).**
 - *Reproaches* include the ugly things that people say about your new faith—that you are ignorant, that they are surprised that you could accept such things, that you are divisive and ruining the family, that you are ruining your life, that you are intolerant and aggressive.
 - Some new believers are even disowned by their family, some are ostracised, some are looked at as an embarrassment.
 - *Tribulations* include pressures of various kinds that a new believe may face because of his new faith.
 - Sometimes there are things like fines and imprisonment.
 - Sometimes you are forced to make changes in your career because of integrity, or because you are dismissed as no longer fitting with the company you had worked for.
 - This brings economic hardships.
 - Second, new converts are made companions of those who are being persecuted—as it says, **“partly while you became companions of those who were so treated.”**
 - You are brought into association with people who are being persecuted, and it lays obligations on you to assist them.

- The author, likely Paul, commends the Hebrews for how they assisted him when he was in prison:
 - verse 3: **for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods,**
 - They took on the burden of helping a persecuted people who were in need—many of them selling property to support them.

B. The Lord has good reasons for testing new believers.

1. First, it helps to weed out those who, though illuminated, are devoid of faith.
 - The pressure comes and those who are not real in their faith quickly withdraw—often within the first year of their profession.
2. Second, it helps to give confidence to the ones who believe.
 - When their faith is tested, they realise how valuable it is and they realise that their faith is real.
 - It gives them a foundation to build upon for the future.
3. Third, it presents a strong testimony to others of how valuable Christ is to them—because though tried, they continue to cling to Him.
 - This testimony stings unbelievers.
 - This is one of the reasons that the opposition comes.
 - Onlookers know that they are not right with God, and it unnerves them to see someone of their acquaintance trusting in what they ought be trusting in.
4. Fourth, it encourages those in the church.
 - When they see the faith of the new covert, they sometimes realise that they have grown cold, and they remember (just the way this passage recommends) what it was like when they first believed.
 - It also gives them confidence in the genuine faith of these new believers—that they are going stick around.
5. Fifth, it strengthens the new believers to fortify them for future battles that they will face.
 - They learn to be good soldiers and to endure hardness for the sake of Jesus Christ and His gospel.

C. But what is the reason for this endurance? this willingness to suffer?

1. It is confidence that what they have in Christ is far better than what the world has to offer them.
 - Yes, they endure sufferings because they are confident that having Christ is far better than having all the world—
 - They see the emptiness of the world and its promises and the fullness of Christ and His glorious kingdom.
2. This confidence is described in verse 34.
 - We saw the first part of it... how they are reminded that when they first believed, the author says, **“you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods,”**
 - and it goes on: **“knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.”**

- It is the recognition that whatever they might have of this world will not endure, but that the inheritance of God's kingdom is incorruptible, undefiled, and will never fade away.
 - There is confidence that the exchange they have made is a good one.
 - That is how they can joyfully accept the plundering of their good.
 - That is the way of the new convert.
- 3. Remember that fresh and early faith.
 - What confidence you had at the first!
 - How beautiful Christ was to you! How confident you were in Him!

TRANS> And this brings us to the next thing.

II. You need that confidence now so that you will be able to endure now!

A. You are exhorted, "Do not cast away your confidence."

1. Interesting language here—not, "don't let it slip away," but "don't *cast* it away."
 - Don't treat your faith like garbage or an encumbrance that you throw out.
 - When the storms of life come, don't try to lighten the load by casting out your faith the way you might cast away something inferior you are carrying on a ship that is about founder.
2. This language puts what a person does in a vivid light.
 - It helps you to realise what you are actually doing when forsake Christ.
 - Don't make euphemistic phrases—
 - You are throwing away your confidence.
 - You are throwing away your inheritance—eternal life in glory.
 - You are throwing away the only Saviour.
 - You are letting yourself think that none of these things are important, that they do not matter.
 - It is to throw away the best things—and in exchange for what?

B. Dear believer, there are so many so many things that will try to rob you of your faith, to weaken your confidence so that you will not go on with the LORD.

1. There is weariness.
 - Like Israel in the wilderness, you get tired of suffering and deprivation.
 - You want relief from the world.
 - You are not confident that it is far better to be the LORD.
2. There is lust.
 - You turn your meditation from the glory of Christ and His kingdom to some desire of your flesh—pornography, fornication, drunkenness, parties, drugs, food in excess, riches...
 - You cast away your confidence that Christ is better and you turn to these vanities.
3. There is the shame and reproach of Christ.
 - You cast away your confidence in order to gain respect in the world...
 - You are embarrassed to say that God made the world in six days...or to claim that Christ is the only way—it is not respected at your school or your place of work... so you start to waver and question...

- Or you are embarrassed to say that abortion and homosexuality are sinful...so you cast off your confidence in God's word.
4. There is failure.
 - You have not been getting on well in your walk—you are stumbling, and your heart is dry, so you start to question the whole thing—
 - It is all even true?
 - Instead of crying out to God for mercy and looking to Christ, you instead begin to question what you once held with confidence.
 - You go looking for support and you find blogs and articles against the faith and you cast away your confidence.
 - You do not endure. You do not continue in the truth.
 5. There is fear—fear can steal away your confidence.
 - You see our society more and more opposing the gospel.
 - You see that your faith could lead to job loss—or even fines and imprisonment—and you begin to dwell on your fears instead of looking at the surpassing excellence of Christ.
 - You cast away your confidence.
 6. Bitterness that can steal away your confidence.
 - Perhaps God has given you hard things, and you start to resent it.
 - A lingering illness, a bad marriage, financial troubles, a hard past...
 - Maybe you have been hurt by someone, or by division in a church—and you dwell on it.
 - You begin to focus on these things instead of on Christ and your bitterness swallows up your confidence in God and His Son.
 - How can you trust the one who has wronged you so?
 - Oh, bitterness has been the ruin of many souls!
 - You don't like the way God has treated you in the world, so you reject Him—when all the while if you had meditated on what He has done for His people, you would have had an entirely opposite perspective.
 - You would have been glad for the hard things in this world that help you to realise that this world is condemned.
- C. You need to hold onto your confidence and not cast it away because if you cast it away, you will not be able to endure.
1. You will not go on with Christ because you don't trust Him anymore.
 - You will not endure suffering and loss because you will not believe it to be worth it.
 - You will not recognise that those in Christ have a better and an enduring possession in heaven.
 2. The admonition is in verse 35: **Don't cast away your confidence which has great reward.**
 - Acquaint yourself with the excellence of Christ.

- That is what makes believers love God’s word.
- It sets them right in their faith, it shows them His surpassing beauty.
- What a dear, gracious, powerful, holy, loving, patient, gentle, merciful, righteous, wise, and mighty Saviour He is.
 - Here is the One who left glory to come here that He might give Himself on the cross for His people’s sin.
 - Here is the One who loves the Father and can bring you to see His glory and majesty, which will satisfy you forever.
 - Here is the One who is the fairest of ten thousand, the One who is without spot or blemish.
- 3. You need to retain your confidence in Him so that you can endure—so that you can go on with Him.
 - And you need to endure so that you receive the promised blessing.
 - Vs 36 is clear: **For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.**
 - So you see how this works... you need confidence in Christ so that you will endure (continue with Him despite all opposition), and you need to endure so that you may receive the promised blessing.

TRANS> That is the third thing to which we now turn.

III. You need to endure so that you can receive the promised blessing.

A. Make no mistake, He is coming to judge the world.

- There will be a day of reckoning.
- 1. Verse 37 speaks of His coming as a certain thing.
 - **“For yet a little while, *and* He who is coming will come and will not tarry.”**
 - One day, whether you believe it or not, you will face Him as judge.
 - He will judge the world in righteousness.
- 2. There is debate among the commentators about what coming this refers to.
 - Some say that it refers to His coming in AD 70 when He came to judge the Jews for having rejected all of God’s servants the prophets, and in the last days, for rejecting His Son.
 - It was a national judgment that brought destruction to the temple and to Jerusalem.
 - It is the judgment that Jesus foretold that would happen in His generation, and that did happen through the hands of the Roman army.
 - Jesus refers to as the Son of Man coming in the clouds of glory— language that was used to refer to God’s judgments through the ages.
 - He also spoke of it as a visitation.
 - Others says that this coming refers to His coming at the last day.
 - In that day, He will come in His body and He will raise the dead and judge the whole world in righteousness, separating the righteous from the wicked.

- He will cast the wicked into the place of outer darkness with Satan, and He will bring the righteous into everlasting blessing.
 - This coming is as certain as the other.
- I am inclined to accept the view of John Owen that this speaks of multiple comings.
- That yes, it refers to His coming in AD 70 and His coming at the end of the age to judge the world, but that it also includes the times when He visits the world or this nation or that nation with judgment or blessing.
 - In a society like ours, His judgment is going to come—He who is coming will come and will not delay.
 - His many comings are all harbingers of the great final coming at the last day, and it is our place to be ready whenever He comes.
 - He will not tarry—that is, each coming will be exactly at the appointed time.
 - They will not be delayed but will be in the time that the Father has fixed.
3. The grand delusion is to think that He will not come,
- To think that even though He has come so many times throughout history.
 - He came into the day of Noah to cleanse the world by water.
 - He came at Babel to scatter the nations.
 - He came to Abraham to bless him and to Sodom to judge them by fire.
 - He came to Israel to deliver them from Egypt, and to judge Egypt and the people of Canaan.
 - We could go on and on—
 - He came in the fullness of time to be born of a woman and to die on the cross that He might save us.
 - He came in AD 70 to judge the world.
 - He came in the fifth century to judge the Roman Empire.
 - He came at the Reformation to reform His church.
 - We need to pray that He would visit us today.
 - Ask Him to come even to bless this worship service.
 - Ask Him to come to deliver His people who are persecuted in China and Persia.
 - And ask Him to hasten His kingdom and come at the end of the age.

TRANS> Make no mistake.

- **He who is coming will come and will not tarry!**

B. Make no mistake, if you do not endure, you will not receive the salvation that is promised at His coming.

- So we read in vs 38: **“Now the just shall live by faith; but if *anyone* draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”**
1. The judgement to be rendered will be based on whether we believe or not.

- The one who is just will live by faith.
 - He will have confidence in God—that what God says and promises is true.
 - He will have confidence in Christ—that He is the great High Priest who saves—the just person is the one who looks to Him for salvation.
 - That is how a person becomes just or righteous in God’s eyes.
 - To approach God without faith in Christ is be condemned.
 - It is to approach God without the salvation that Christ procured by His suffering and death on the cross.
 - It is to come to God without a covering for sin which will bring about sure condemnation.
 - 2. The one who draws back is the one who professed but who does not continue.
 - When their faith is tested, it proves to be false—they go back and walk no more with Christ.
 - They started out with Him, but had no real root in themselves, so when the day of battle came, they turned back.
 - They forsook Him because they had no confidence that His way was better than the world’s.
 - They loved this present world and lost their own souls.
 - The dreadful words of God are, “My soul will have no pleasure in Him.”
 - God speaks of Himself as having a soul to indicate that He will oppose such a one with His whole being.
 - These are ominous, terrifying words that pertain to those who draw back.
 - 3. Testing will come and we need to be prepared to endure.
 - And the way to endure is by faith in Christ.
 - It is to cast ourselves on Him for salvation, knowing that He will save us and keep us to the end.
 - “But wait,” someone will say, “you are telling us that we must depend on God so that we will be able to continue depending on Him.”
 - Yes, I am. That is the dance of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility. We put confidence in God to give us confidence in God. We do and He does at the same time. This is how the Bible presents such things. It is a dance.
- C. Make no mistake, if your faith is real, you will continue with Him.
1. Those who draw back show that they never had true faith to start with.
 - If they had, they might go so far as to deny him in the heat of pressure like Peter did, but they will not be of those who draw back to destruction.
 - The seed of faith will remain, and it will revive them again.
 2. In verse 39, the author expresses his confidence that the Hebrews who receive his letter are among those who have true faith.
 - He says: **But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.**

- Likely, he says this with assurance because he has seen their faith tested and seen them endure.
 - Of course, it is not an infallible statement that none of them will prove to be false sons. The apostles had co-workers who turned out to be false.
 - But it is a general statement that is true—that those who have suffered for their faith already show that they are genuine.
 - And that if they are genuine now, they are not of those who draw back but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.
 - They have sincerely put themselves into Jesus’ gracious hands for salvation, and they are presently trusting Him to save them and to keep them.
 - If that is so, He will keep them and save them indeed...
 - Anyone who trusts with true faith is of those who will not draw back to perdition but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

3. So what about you?

- Do away with all uncertainty by trusting in Him—“Lord, I give myself to you to save me that I might be pardoned, transformed, and brought to glory. I trust you for forgiveness and eternal life.”
 - You are among those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Conclusion: How important it is to have confidence in our Lord.

- We have need of confidence that we might endure.
- And we must endure that we might obtain the promised reward—by His gracious hand!
 - Do not let anything rob you of your confidence in Him.
 - You need it because you need Him.
 - We will see many examples of this enduring faith in chapter 11.