

Faith that Endures Hebrews 10:32-39

Introduction

Psalm 141:4

Do not let my heart incline to any evil, to busy myself with wicked deeds in company with men who work iniquity, and let me not eat of their delicacies!

The Psalmist often points us to the reality the battle against sin requires guarding our heart with its thoughts and desires. The war is at the heart level. Hebrews keeps reminding us that our best defense against surrendering to sin and unbelief is a strong offense. Before sounding the alarm in Hebrews 10:26-31, the author calls us to be bold in drawing near to God in worship, bold in holding fast to our confession of hope, bold in stirring up one another to love and good works.

And now, after the sober warning about turning away from Christ and experiencing the terrifying vengeance of God on His adversaries, Hebrews teaches us where to focus our minds so that our faith endures.

32 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, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. ³⁷ For, "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."

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

1. Look Back (32-34).
2. Look Forward (35-37).
3. Live Trusting (38-39). Look Up.

1. Look Back (32-34)

³² 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.

If you want to endure, make sure you set your mind on how God helped you endure the struggles of the past. Remember those days.

Don't erase the past. God's care for you through the rough times proves His reliability. That you did not cave then demonstrates His Spirit's empowering of you. You and many other believers have experienced His faithfulness throughout history.

Amazing Grace—

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come.
Tis grace hath led me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.*

Hebrews 11 will give an extensive history of believers who endured. God is Lord of history, including your own. Don't forget that sacred past. How He sustained you through many dangers, toils, and snares. Forgetfulness of God's goodness to you and ingratitude weaken our ability to stand firm.

Psalm 103:2

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.

After you were enlightened—there is joy when light of the good news finally shines in the sin-darkened heart. And for good reason. Once blind, now we see. Freedom from sin's slavery. Hope beyond the grave. Welcome in a community of faith. Children of light. Children of God.

Ephesians 4:17-18

17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. **18** They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.

No one would ever want to go back. That said, the evil one, the enemy of God, is not happy to lose one of his slaves. And he fights back. The world, the flesh, and the devil conspire to intimidate, discourage, frighten, harass, and harm the children of God any way they can. They target the vulnerable—the newborn, the weary, the isolated, the disappointed and disillusioned. That is why all who want to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution in some form or another, even in times and places where the persecution is not open or official.

Look at the way Hebrews describes his readers' early experience in 32-34 (slide):

Hard struggle with sufferings

Struggle—word we get athletics from—
strenuous effort

Sufferings—common word used for suffering,
including that of Christ

These believers bore up under the stress,
strain, effort, pain

Public exposure to reproach and affliction

To bring up on the stage in order to hold them up to public derision and shame

Reproach—insults, reviling

Affliction—pressure, trouble

1 Corinthians 1—considered fools for Christ’s sake

The most common mistreatment we face in our country at the current time. Before you can attack people physically, financially, and legally, you must first demonize them—you must make them the bad guys. For years now we’ve seen continual misrepresentation, ridicule, and scapegoating of gospel-believing Christians. We are portrayed as willfully ignorant, hateful, tradition-bound, an obstacle if not a menace to society’s advancement.

This pattern has become more common as America has grown more irreligious, but it is by no means a recent development. It’s as old as Christianity itself. Actually older. Is it not significant that Christ accomplished our redemption on a cross—the instrument of execution for the worst of criminals? Should we expect that following Christ will somehow ingratiate us to His enemies, secular and religious? Should we validate their redefinitions of right and wrong in the name of love? How can you say you love human beings if you join in perpetuating the very lies

that are destroying them? That's not love, that's cowardice. You can be kind and be honest, too. Love is not love without truth. And truth is not truth without love.

Do you view God's Word through the lens of current culture, or do you view current culture through the lens of God's Word?

There's not a year that goes by but that some Christian celebrity or Christian ministry or Christian friend caves to this relentless cultural pressure in an effort to be considered a good person in tune with the spirit of the age.

Matthew 5:10-12

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11** "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

To be mistreated for Christ's sake is a mark of authenticity. It displays that we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom at odds with the kingdoms of the age. We just need to make sure that the evil spoken against us is false. That we give no real cause.

Acts 5:40-42

40 And when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. **41** Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. **42** And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

Sometimes the persecution does not fall on you but on your fellow believers. The mark pseudo-Christians is that they pile on to distance themselves from these despised brothers and sisters. Regenerate people respond in the opposite way:

Partnering with those so treated

Profound sense of community and common cause with brothers and sisters who were suffering for Jesus. Showed itself in very practical, down-to-earth ways:

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.

Compassion on those in prison

Com-passion—to suffer together with someone

Those imprisoned were not out of sight thus out of mind. You remember the prayer meeting they were having for Peter when the angel of God freed him from prison and impending execution (Acts 12). Believers also brought food and other items of comfort— Paul references brothers doing that for him when he was in prison; often those in prison had no other source of staying alive.

Matthew 25:34-36, 40

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ 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, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Joyfully accepted plundering of your property

"Joyfully accepted plundering" sounds strange. It's hard to imagine being glad somebody plundered your property.

Property ownership is sacred, as the commands not to steal or covet reveal, and God sets himself against those who take property that does not belong to them—“moving the ancient landmark” had to do with real estate grabs from those whose family estate the land was. Taking a person’s belongings is a serious crime against another human being made in God’s image. If you’ve ever had anything significant stolen from you, you know the dehumanizing outrage it can do on you.

The sacredness of personal property makes giving it away to meet the needs of others a noble thing. The early church gladly shared to care for needy members, selling possessions, belongings, and property to do so (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32,34-35).

Don’t pretend you love Jesus and His people if you won’t cheerfully give to advance the gospel to the world and to meet the needs of the church family. You’re still in love with your money—and with yourself. You’re not giving God the credit for sustaining you, and you’re not trusting Him to continue doing so. Jesus made it absolutely clear that you can’t serve God and money at the same time.

The language here, however, points to forceable confiscation of their property by government officials or plundering by a mob

riot because they were Christians. They were still joyful even losing their property that way.

We measure value by what we are willing to pay for something. To joyfully accept the plundering of your property means that you have something that is worth even more to you than whatever you may lose.

Matthew 13:44-46

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, ⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Moses, Hebrews 11:24-26

²⁴ By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

These believers could look back and remember how highly they valued Jesus by what they endured, including forceable confiscation of their property.

How possible for them to give up their stuff with joy? They knew you had a better possession that remains theirs forever. "Better and abiding."

Why would you lay up all your treasures in a place where you know you'll lose it all? Direct them heavenward where your eternal home is. Leads us into the second part of the strategy.

We don't need to live in the past, but it's important to treasure memories of the past. We can live only in the moment, but we do so in light of what we've learned from the past and in anticipation of what we will receive in the future. When we pray, we operate from the present looking for God to act in the future in a way consistent with what He'd done in the past.

Reflect on what God has done, how He's brought you through.

Reflect on what you've already invested in the cause of Christ. Was that all for nothing? Why would you throw that away?

Look back and see how far you've come. Don't stop. Keep going.

*Kneeling on this battleground
Seeing just how much You've done
Knowing every victory
Was Your power in us*

*Scars and struggles on the way
But with joy our hearts can say
Yes, our hearts can say*

*Never once did we ever walk alone
Never once did You leave us on our own
You are faithful, God, You are faithful*

2. Look Forward (35-37)

³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. ³⁷ For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay;

"What is promised" points us to the future. There are all kinds of difficulties we endure in the present for a payoff in the future. Rigorous training to gain athletic superiority. Hours of difficult study to qualify for the career we want. Painful medical procedures to be cured of cancer. Not spending part of our income now so that we can invest it for later use.

We throw away trash not treasure. What we have in Jesus only grows in value. Boldness for Him brings great reward. The payback is huge. It's the best investment you can possibly make. Nothing on earth can give you the rate of return Jesus does. And whatever

we may lose for Jesus now will be more than compensated for.

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

And there's no risk you'll lose what's yours in Jesus. God reserves it for you, and God preserves you for it.

1 Peter 1:3-5

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Philippians 1:6

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

It's coming in just "a little while"—this life is a vapor, and a thousand years are like a day to God. His waiting does not mean He's forgotten His promise. The future He's promised will come. And He will come.

God spoke these last words to the prophet Habakkuk, fretting over the evil of his people and questioning why God wasn't doing anything to fix it. When God told him He was about to send in the Babylonians to bring judgment on Habakkuk's people, the prophet was perplexed all the more. How could God punish Judah with a nation even more unrighteous than they?

God answer was essentially this: Just trust me. I will bring justice on the Babylonians, too. What I've predicted won't delay. My promises will come true. And I will preserve those who trust Me through it all.

In our study of the minor prophets we learned from Habakkuk:

We can't assume that because our suffering comes in ways we don't fully understand that God somehow lacks integrity. His timing is perfect, His purpose is just, and His character is good—trust Him and you'll be okay.

When we are young we are often looking toward the future, and it looks bright. When we are old, most of our earthly life is in the past, and those without the Lord have little to look forward to. But for us who belong to Jesus our future is always bright. We can walk our full journey of life with eager expectation.

Proverbs 4:18-19

18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.

19 The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

Take time to think about your destiny. Take time to anticipate your inheritance. Declare by the way you live that you are looking toward your homeland, a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. These are just the early hours of dawn. The full day is yet to come. You are chasing that future.

3. Live Trusting (38-39)—Look up.

38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”

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

Our present focus—

Do God’s will (v. 36: after you have done God’s will)—

Live by faith, not shrinking back—courage, boldness (v. 38)

another way to say that is

Live to God's pleasure (v. 38) God takes no pleasure in those who shrink back. Why?

Hebrews 11:6

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.

Does it surprise you that God takes pleasure in human beings?

Does it not make sense that your treating Him as trustworthy and good would bring Him pleasure, and your not doing so is does not do so? Do you like it when other people don't think you're trustworthy? When other people are suspicious of you and resentful toward you?

Doing God's will in all the practical ways that shows itself rises from your estimate of His reliability to make it worth it for you. Courageous living is not self-confidence. It is confidence in God.

The original context of these words is in the Lord's words to the prophet Habakkuk:
Habakkuk 2:2-4

² And the LORD answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. ³ For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will

surely come; it will not delay. ⁴ Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith."

Hebrews quotes the Septuagint version (Greek translation) of verse 4: "If he draws back, my soul will not be pleased with him."

Life's path can be treacherous and often is, but every believer can say with Habakkuk, "God will help me walk it safely. He is my salvation. He is my strength. I can't lose."

No wonder the little book of Habakkuk ends with a joyful song of praise to God in the face of the impending disaster that was about to break on Habakkuk and his people. But among those people were faithful ones like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and notably a soon to be taken captive teenager named Daniel, along with his friends Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego. Through the years of captivity in pagan Babylon, they would prove the truth of God's promise to Habakkuk that the believing ones would survive. What amazing exploits these young men did through reliance on God even in the courts of the empire that took them captive and destroyed their homeland. Fiery furnace, lions' den, cutthroat politicians, you name it. God proved loyal to them through it all. Their experience recalls the words God spoke through Isaiah long before.

Isaiah 43:1-3a

¹ But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ³ For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

That is the kind of God who is with us all the days of the present until we reach the future consummation of the age.

Romans 8:35-39

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You are not alone today, nor will you be tonight, or tomorrow morning. Look up. Keep trusting. God is with us. He will never leave us or forsake us. He is our Shepherd each step of the way. Keep your eyes on Him. Pursue His will. Seek His pleasure. Live with bold courage. He knows how to use His rod and staff. Practice the presence of God. Talk to Him all along the way.

Conclusion

Proverbs 3:5-8

- ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.
⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
⁸ It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones.

1. Look Back (32-34).
2. Look Forward (35-37).
3. Keep Trusting (38-39). Look Up.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the divine victories you've experienced in the past?
2. What are some of the effects of your keeping those in mind? What happens when you forget them?

3. Most of us have not experienced physical or legal mistreatment on account of our faith, but ridicule and pressure to conform godless culture is common. What strategies have you found help you bear up under that pressure?
4. According to the text what is the secret to using your personal property for the good of others and even being willing to lose your personal property joyfully for Jesus? (Hebrews 10:34b)
5. How does focusing on the “great reward” God has promised help you endure temptation, mistreatment, and even sufferings common to this life?
6. Why does it make sense that God would take pleasure in those who count Him trustworthy and good? How is living that way a reversal of what happened when Adam and Eve fell to Satan’s lie?
7. How can God’s promise to fearful Habakkuk (the righteous—like Daniel and his friends—will survive the coming calamities by their faith) give you courage to navigate the possible threats that may come your way?