

Hebrews 10:32-39 "My Righteous One Will Live By Faith"

HEB 10:32-39 "Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. 35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. 36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. 37 For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. 38 But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." (Hab. 2:3,4) 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved."

Our text this morning is actually designed to bring comfort and encouragement to these Hebrew Christians who have just been warned of impending judgment on those who walk away from Christ.

I'm sure as this letter was read to them they cringed inside as the writer exhorted them not to even entertain the idea of turning back to Judaism, let alone actually go back, because the consequences of such action would be indicative of a heart that never really was given in earnest to Jesus Christ.

None of us would like to think that we don't really love and follow Christ. But this warning is to show the dangers of apostasy. There is the reality that many inside the church are there for reasons other than wanting to abide in Christ and give their entire lives as a pleasing sacrifice for Christ, who gave Himself for us and our sin.

As was said last week, this is not an indictment against these people, in that they actually were turning away from Christ, but a solemn warning that the way in which we live in this world tells the world to whom we belong. If we are turning away from Christ, then the only conclusion one can draw is that we've forsaken the only one who can bring salvation, thus the verse HEB 10:26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left,....."

This should also be a warning of God's judgment on the world which has rejected "the way", and it should motivate us to reach out to them before it's too late. Our writer begins to bring into focus how all of this is to wake us up out of our sleep. And now in our text we will see how he ends this section with a call to endurance and perseverance in our faith in Christ as we move forward in obedience to His will.

HEB 10:32-33 "Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated."

This may sound like an odd request but it's the very thing which our writer wants to drive home in light of the fact that they may have become complacent, which gave rise to the exhortation in HEB 10:23 "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."

They may have begun to waver and vacillate and give one the impression that serving Christ could be done on their own terms. No, our writer wants them to do something very important here in verse 32. He wants them to *remember*.

In other words go back in time and consider the early days of your faith in Christ as you walked with Him. He uses the phrase, "after you had received the light..." (NIV). The NAS uses the phrase, "after being enlightened." This is the time in which God revealed Himself to you and you saw your need for the Savior and repented of your sin and embraced His atoning sacrifice and His life by faith.

By the way, this is in stark contrast to what we saw in HEB 6:4-6 "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 6 if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace."

Though there may be enlightenment not all will truly see that light and those who have chosen to simply taste it without embracing it by faith will find that walking away when the times get tough will be a very easy thing to do. To walk away from the only way of salvation leaves no one else to turn to for life eternal.

But, remembering those things God did in our past and the ways He brought us through them is one way in which we can be encouraged for the present and the future. A.W. Pink puts it this way: "fresh courage for the present is to be drawn by us from calling to mind God's goodness in the past."

If we've been enlightened by the Spirit of God to the truth of Christ's salvation, and have accepted that by faith, then that faith, which has been given to us by God, will carry us through to the end. After all Christ is not only the author of our faith He is also the perfecter of our faith. (Heb.12:2)

But faith has feet and we're called to walk in that faith. But God never wants us to forget His involvement in our lives in the past as it shows us for the present that He was there then and He'll be here today.

When we first embraced Christ by faith it was a light that God turned on in regeneration by the Holy Spirit and exposed our sin but gave hope in the Savior. For all of us who can remember those days, they were very special.

Our love for Christ was fresh and alive and it seemed nothing could get us off course. Our zeal for the Lord burned hot and we were bold in being witnesses for Christ. And in many cases we were looked upon as fools for walking after a God we couldn't see.

Some of you may remember when family members thought you went off the deep end. You loved your family and friends enough to give them the truth of the gospel of Christ and it didn't really matter if they thought you were a nut. You wanted them to know the one true God and not have them be separated from Him.

But you also might remember the persecution that came with your stance for your Lord and Savior. It may not have been of the physical kind, but you might remember the pain of being ostracized in some cases. "Here comes the Jesus freak, keep the conversation going in any direction but Godward."

Some may have been bold enough to flat-out tell you, "I don't want to hear anything about this Jesus stuff." But it didn't stop your zeal or quench your love for them. You shined bright around them and walked the walk when you weren't able to talk the truth in their presence.

I remember going through Evangelism Explosion which is a gospel presentation outline. And I remember coming home after class and

asking my mom to help with me with my homework. And I would ask her to role play with me so I could get the outline down along with the responses one would encounter and how to deal with them according to the word of God.

She probably knew what I was doing, but she helped me with my homework and got to hear the gospel again. But here in our text these Christians were told to remember some very painful experiences as a direct result of their faith and zeal for Christ.

And yet in the midst of those trials they were not seen so much as painful, but opportunities to shine for Christ.

HEB 10:32 "Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering."

They didn't waver. They stood firm despite the suffering. That's what our writer wants them to recall. And he adds to that by saying in HEB 10:33-34 "Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions."

What an attitude to have. What a faith which was able to look beyond the immediate circumstance and look to the One who holds eternity for us. He essentially says, 'I want you to remember those days when insult and persecution were a daily part of your life. I want you to remember those days when you showed sympathy to your fellow Christians who were thrown into prison for their faith and how you were there for them to feed them and take care of them and put yourself in a position of being arrested as well.

'I want you to remember when the civil authorities came in and took your property because you were a Christian and yet you didn't give up or despair of life because you knew that the things of this world are going to pass away and you knew that your true possessions from Christ are eternal and are awaiting you.'

'Remember those days? Remember your faith in action? Remember your attitude and your zeal for the Lord in the face of adversity? What happened? Where did the zeal go? What happened to your understanding that your true treasures are laid up

for you in heaven?' These were the questions for these Hebrew Christians and questions we all need to consider.

I personally remember those days of zeal during "combat" very vividly in Gainesville, Fl., walking the campus handing out tracts, talking to people about Christ. I remember entering into mini-debates about the truth of God's word and praying for people. It was like walking on cloud nine.

But as time set in, as more responsibility in life became a daily duty and the reality that not everyone wanted this truth, my zeal at times was adversely effected. It became work and therefore at times a drudgery. But it wasn't because my salvation was any less real or that Christ was empowering me any less. Rather, my focus was changed. Instead of living in the reality of my prize in Christ I was tempted at times to think that my prize was something to be attained in this world.

Often times zeal can be quenched by prolonged persecution or trial. Sometimes it can be quenched by a lack of persecution or a challenge of your faith. And other times it can be quenched by this world becoming a priority to the degree that Christ takes a back seat.

It's as though some take the attitude, "Lord I can only deal with one world at a time. When I get out of this world I'll serve You at Your throne, but until that time I just need to get through this life."

In a sense we live in two worlds. We live in this physical world, but it's not our home. Our home is heavenly and spiritual, with its final expression on the new earth, but the spiritual exists in this present physical world. That's part of what Paul conveyed when he said in EPH 6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

But, just as there are the evil aspects of this spiritual world, we have the assurance that our spiritual life in Christ is real today and that if Christ is for us, who can be against us?

With this truth and hope our writer exhorts his readers.

HEB 10:35-36 "So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. 36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised."

The imagery here in the Greek of throwing away your confidence is the idea similar to a piece of clothing which you no longer want. You consider it and conclude it's not worth keeping and then you take it off and put it to the side as to discard it.

But notice our writer isn't speaking about discarding or throwing off their faith, but rather their confidence or boldness as it's translated in other places.

What confidence does he speak of? It's a boldness or confidence which speaks of assurance. When our assurance is thrown to the side because of circumstances going on in our lives we are less likely to be effective in doing the work of God and representing Him faithfully.

But where do we get this confidence? Well, some would have us believe that, by-and-large, it comes only from the victories in life. Well, it certainly can, and that's one thing God asks them to remember as He was with them in the past in their trials. But, you can't always depend on victory, as we have a tendency to define it.

No, ultimately our confidence comes from what our writer spoke of earlier.

HEB 10:19-22 "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."

Our confidence and assurance comes through Jesus Christ and His shed blood on our behalf. It is getting our focus back on the One who said, "He will never leave us or forsake us", who said, "nothing will separate us from the love of Christ", who said, "of all that the Father gives Me I will lose none."

When the Almighty God and creator of the universe is considered and trusted, how can anything be bigger than Him? Is He not worth trusting? Of course He is. But here's where we get into the problem with dealing with those two worlds: I can see and experience my problems in this world; I can't see God.

No, but you can see His work and His promises fulfilled in His Son. You may not have been there 2,000 years ago, but Paul was, John and Peter were along with everyone else who personally saw

the risen Christ and testified with their words and their lives that Jesus Christ is who He says He is.

We may not have seen, but we believe because it truly happened just as God said it would. You might remember what Jesus told one of His disciples when he insisted on seeing for Himself the risen Lord.

JOH 20:25-29 "So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." 26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

The ones who have not seen Him, in that verse, are you and me. It's when we live in that assurance of His life given for us and who was raised bodily from the dead, that we know we have access to Him and fellowship with Him forever. We can walk in that assurance and be strengthened to do His work, knowing there is a great reward.

But to do the work we cannot grow weary, which is evidently what was happening to these Hebrew Christians.

HEB 10:36 "You need to *persevere* so that when you have *done* the will of God, you will *receive* what he has promised."

We see three things in this verse. **1)** We need to persevere, **2)** do the will of God and **3)** receive what He has promised, which of course is life eternal.

What is perseverance? It's not giving up. It's taking one more step when we're not sure we can. But it doesn't find its strength in itself. It goes back to its confidence, its assurance, which is found in Christ.

Jesus said in LUK 21:19 "By standing firm you will gain life." He is not suggesting that the standing will allow someone to perform in such a way that you will gain life, rather it will be the way

through which the life in you will show itself, by faith, to be true and assure you the prize will be gained.

Christ persevered to the end. It is His life in us which allows us to do the same, because we belong to Him and are "in Him". He is bringing us home, but He doesn't neglect the means of actually demonstrating that life in us, which is to stand firm till the end. This is why we have so many encouragements in this area.

Jesus addresses this when referring to the seed which takes root in the heart of one of His children. LUK 8:15 "But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by *persevering* produce a crop."

ROM 15:4-6 "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through *endurance* and the *encouragement of the Scriptures* we might have hope. 5 May the *God who gives endurance and encouragement* give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But as Paul tells us our endurance and encouragement, which comes from God, will encourage and prompt us to "glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is what our writer addresses in verse 36 of our text when he says that "you need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised."

Perseverance is always connected to doing the will of God according to His word. To persevere in any other way, other than doing His will, is not true perseverance. Jesus persevered and obeyed the Father by doing the Father's will.

You might remember what Jesus told His disciples.

JOH 4:31-34 "Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." 32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." 33 Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" 34 "My food," said Jesus, " *is to do the will of him* who sent me and *to finish his work*."

You and I have been called to do the will of God and to finish His work in our lives. God has work for all of us to do. None of us are unimportant in God's design. All of us are to glorify Him with our lives. And He has given all of us gifts to accomplish His will.

But calling ourselves Christians and yet not doing the will of God is contrary to everything Christ spoke of when it comes to our faith being shown in a way that is alive and vibrant in Him.

MAT 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

MAT 12:50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Again, it must be pointed out that Jesus is not saying that doing something will gain you eternal life. He simply means that if you have eternal life it will show itself true by doing His will out of gratitude and thankfulness.

Jonathan Edwards says this of doing God's will by referring to it as practicing the will of God. "Practice is the proper evidence of Christian fortitude. A good soldier is proved, not at home, but in the field of battle. As holy practice is the chief evidence of our being possessed of grace, so the degree in which our experience is productive of practice, shows the degree in which our experience is spiritual and divine. Whatever pretensions we may make to great discoveries, great love and joy, they are no further to be regarded than as they actually influence our practice." [Religious Affections, p.344-5; Jonathan Edwards]

Doing the will of God is practicing the will of God in everyday life as we depend on Him, growing in His grace and giving Him the glory. And this is where we find that assurance in an earthly sense. It's true that our assurance and confidence is faith in Him, but it is also found in the way He is practically working out our sanctification, which is proof of our justification, which will ultimately be seen in our glorification.

Paul touches on this in ROM 8:15-17 "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now *if* we are children, then we are heirs -heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

The "if" is not saying that simply through suffering we earn favor with God, rather the "if" demonstrates that we will indeed do the will of God even in the midst of sufferings if called upon to do

that. Why? Because we belong to Christ and we know He will be there for us, and give us the strength to persevere. But it is we who persevere. It is we who obey and follow. God will give us the strength to do it, but He doesn't do it for us.

Are we persevering, are we following, are we doing His will? The Spirit is bearing witness with our Spirits that He is doing a work in our lives and demonstrating that the life of Christ in us is real.

Back to our text, our writer now encourages his readers to persevere knowing that He's coming back for us.

HEB 10:37 "For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay."

But the question we must consider is how can we wait until that day? Again the answer may be very simple but it's true none the less.

HEB 10:38 "But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."

It comes full circle. Where is our assurance and our confidence? If it's in Christ then we will trust Him and live by faith. Does that mean our faith will never fail us? No, the flesh is weak and sometimes we have a tendency to live in our feelings and emotions rather than by faith in the One who is always constant.

But, overall we will persevere as we trust Him who perseveres with us and strengthens us as we rely on His Holy Spirit who indwells us.

The last verse of chapter 10 really puts into perspective how our writer sees these Hebrew Christians. He's warned them of what happens to those who fall away and how God is not pleased with those who shrink back. But here in verse 39 he says, "But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved."

Again, it's clear that our writer doesn't believe that his readers are those who could lose their salvation, if truly born again. He recognizes the problem of apostasy, but states it here that he doesn't believe that these people are apostatizing.

Does this mean he doesn't see any problem with them at all? No, he recognizes that they may have become lax in their faith and takes the hypothetical logical conclusion of those who would go so far in becoming so lax and indifferent that they would walk away.

But it's intended to wake them up from their slumber and laziness. The NAS puts verse 39 this way. "But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul."

Our writer essentially says, 'you've got faith and that faith will preserve you and bring you home to Christ because it's Christ who is working in you for His good pleasure to make sure you get home. There may be some bumpy paths we find ourselves walking, but we're His children and our Father won't let us fall completely, but will hold us up with His righteous right hand.

We live by faith and that includes, not only receiving our hope by faith in Christ, but living out our life in this world by faith in that same gracious and loving Savior.

Andrew Murray sums it up this way. "If I am to be sure of salvation, if I am to be strong against every temptation, if I am to live daily as one in whom God's soul has pleasure, I must see to one thing -- to be a man of faith..... surely it needs no words to urge us to make faith, faith alone, the faith of the heart, the unceasing sacrifice we bring our God."

Here's what the apostle Peter says of our faith.

1PE 1:3-7 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade -kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."