

Crisis, Challenge & Comfort for a Pilgrim People

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're going to turn now to our Bibles and to our reading for this morning. Beginning this morning, a new study for this term and probably for a good bit of next term in the book of Hebrews.

And so today is introductory. You've also got in the notice sheets, I think, a double-sided handout. I've given you there a very simplified, big-picture overview of the shape of the book on one side and there's a bit of an outline for today's introduction on the other.

So keep that to hand and use it today and keep it in your Bibles and use it as we study through. But today we are going to dip our toes into the waters of Hebrews, waggle on the T for a little while, try and immerse ourselves a little bit in the overall message.

So we're going to read in four places, beginning in chapter 1, then a little bit from chapter 2 and chapter 3, and then from chapter 10. So you will have to have your fingers in the pages and follow me, but I hope that this will make some kind of sense.

Hebrews 1 then at verse 1, page 1001, if you have a church Bible. Long ago, many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom he also created the world.

[1 : 3 0] He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited, is more excellent than theirs.

And to chapter 2, verse 1. Therefore, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

Down to chapter 3, verse 12. How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? So, chapter 3, verse 12.

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it's called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

For we share in Christ, if indeed, if indeed, we hold our confidence firm to the end. As it's said today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

[3 : 1 0] Now right over to chapter 10 and verse 35. Verse 35. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward, for you have need of endurance, perseverance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised.

For, as the Bible says, the Old Testament, the prophets, yet a little while in the coming one will come and not delay. For my righteous one shall live by faith.

If he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Amen. May God bless to us his word. Amen. Well, please do open your Bible, and perhaps you turn to the very last page, the last paragraphs of this letter to the Hebrews.

I say letter, and that's the title it has in our Bibles, and the very last paragraph ends with a few greetings, as other letters tend to do. But, as we heard in the reading, it doesn't begin like a letter, does it?

[4 : 3 6] It doesn't say from the Apostle Paul or Peter or Jude or any of these others. It actually begins much more like a sermon. Long ago, many times, in many ways, God spoke.

If you look at chapter 13, verse 22 here, you'll see that the writer says that what he's written is a word of exhortation. And that's actually the standard term used in those days for what we would call an expository sermon.

That's what Paul tells Timothy to do in 1 Timothy 4. Devote yourself to the public reading of scriptures, to the exhortation and teaching. And as you read through Hebrews, you'll find that's exactly what it is.

It's a coherent exposition and application based on multiple texts from the Bible, from the Old Testament, from a church leader with a real pastoral heart.

But, it tells us here in verse 23 that he wants to see them soon. And, no doubt, he'd much rather be speaking to them face to face, but he can't do that. So, he's written his sermon to them to be read by somebody else.

[5 : 40] It's his personal word, though, to the church. And notice, by the way, he says it's a brief word. It would take a bit over an hour to read through the book of Hebrews publicly.

So, some of you might not think that's a very brief sermon, but there you are. That's what the Bible says is a brief sermon. Anyway. But, it's full of much practical theology, much applied truth about God, about our life, and things that are vital to life and to eternal life.

So, there's lots for us to learn, and we will be delving into the detail of that in the weeks to come. But, it's also vital that we get clear the central clear message, the theme tune, if you like, of that whole sermon.

After all, the writer tells us it's a word of exhortation that he's written. It's a unified, coherent, take-home message. And, we need to take that to heart so that we can apply it to ourselves, just as the first readers did.

And, we mustn't miss the word for the trees. We must get clear on this overall thrust of Hebrews, and its importance for us today. So, I want to do two things to help with that.

[6 : 53] First of all, I've written a new song. We'll learn that this evening. And, I've tried to paraphrase the letter's message, so that in singing it, hopefully we will learn it and be able to retain it.

Somebody was telling me just recently that the Scottish paraphrase is a great feature of the Scottish church, that they've really fallen out of favor, not been used much, and we've got to recover them. Well, we had one at the beginning of the service today.

I'm writing a new Scottish paraphrase, and we'll learn that tonight. I think you'll enjoy it, especially if you're a RunRig fan, but I won't say any more. Anyway, this morning, come along and see and sing. But this morning, I want to give an introduction, an overview to the big picture of Hebrews by looking at why he wrote it, to whom he wrote it, what he's exhorting them to do, and how he encourages them in that.

And, of course, what he says to them is just as relevant to us today, and to God's people in every age. Because Hebrews points out so clearly that from the very beginning and right to the very end, God's people have always been and always will be a pilgrim people.

We're journeying to our final reward. We're journeying to the eternal rest of God's everlasting kingdom. And just as Israel in the wilderness had to keep on towards the land of promise, so also today, we've got a race to run all the way to completion, says the writer.

[8 : 25] And on our journey to the heavenly city, we, just like the church he writes to here, and indeed just like Israel of old, we are going to face many potential crises. And we're going to need constant challenges.

And we're going to need a lot of constant comfort. Here's a message addressing real crises, issuing a real challenge, and offering real comfort, as it turns the readers constantly back to the majestic Son of God, the unique revealer of God, and indeed the unique redeemer of man.

That's his message ringing out all the way through. It's Jesus alone, and it's Jesus forever that we need. That way is the only way to the unwavering faith that will lead us to his unshakable kingdom. So first of all, let's think about who he's addressing and why. He's written this to struggling believers who are facing a real crisis.

And Hebrews gives us honest evidence of the real pressures that face Christian believers. A process which can very easily lead to disillusion and to drift from the true gospel and the true church.

[9 : 42] And which in the end may well lead to defection and desertion from Christ. To apostasy and falling away. That's the word he uses.

There is a real threat that Hebrews is addressing. Chapter 2, verse 1 that we read, it warns, doesn't it, about drifting from the gospel. And the end point of that is those awful words we read in chapter 3, verse 12.

Falling away, actively turning away from the living God. And that can only lead, he says, to terrible and eternal judgment. This is a very real and threatening crisis for this church.

They're not getting away from this language that he uses. Keep on going on that road, he says, in chapter 6. And you're showing utter contempt for the Son of God. You're profaning his blood.

You're outraging his spirit. And you're heading for the fires of judgment. It's the same thing towards the end of chapter 10. He is warning about the eternal peril of that kind of action.

[10:48] Why would professing Christians ever possibly do such a thing? Well, because we face great pressures in this world.

Because we don't really belong, do we, to this world or indeed in this world. That's been the mark of God's people right from the very beginning. We'll see that when we come to Hebrews 11. Abraham and all the patriarchs, they acknowledge that they were strangers and exiles on this earth.

Because God had called them to a permanent home, to a better country in the world to come. And we know that, don't we? And meantime, the pilgrimage of faith through this life is very hard.

Because we're living for what is still unseen. In fact, the very definition of faith in Hebrews chapter 11 is seeing the invisible. In chapter 11, verse 27, we're told that Moses turned his back on the visible rewards of this world in Egypt, enduring as seeing him who was invisible.

Of course, the problem for us is that the visible world is all around us and very close to us. And the lures and the appetites of the visible world and the threats of the visible world are all too real.

[12:05] And it's much easier, isn't it, to walk by sight than by faith. By faith in the unseen God and as yet the unseen world to come. And so the pressures to drift back into living for the world that God has actually called us out of, just like he called Abraham out of it, the pressure is very great.

Look with me at the end of chapter 10 and then we'll look at the beginning of chapter 12. The verses that are all around this great chapter about faith in chapter 11.

Because I think here we see very clearly what some of these real pressures were in the world of these people that he's writing to. And I think we'll see how similar these pressures are for us today.

First of all, one pressure they certainly faced was that of real suffering. Look at chapter 10, verse 32 to 34. It tells us that in earlier times, after their coming to faith in Christ, they endured a very hard struggle with sufferings.

Verse 34, some of them were imprisoned. Some of them were plundered of all their goods. We can't be sure, but it does seem likely, I think, that this letter was written to Jewish Christians, Jews of the diaspora who had become Christians, living very probably in Rome or near Rome.

[13:28] At the very end of the letter, you'll notice that there's greetings from your fellow Italians, people that they knew. And it's very likely that what these verses about the suffering here are describing is that which happened in AD 49 under the Emperor Claudius, when many Jewish Christians were expelled from Rome.

Subsequently, things settled somewhat, and many of them had returned. But now, this letter is probably being written in AD 67 or maybe AD 68, towards the end of Nero's reign, at a time of gathering far worse persecution.

Chapter 12, verse 4 tells us they had not yet had to shed their blood in martyrdom. But very probably that was something that was looming close on the horizon. Well, wouldn't you, in that circumstance, feel great pressure to find some form of Christianity that could make peace with the culture, make peace with the rulers, avoid that kind of suffering?

Apparently, Judaism, because it was recognized by the Empire as an ethnic religion, it was tolerated, and the Jews were allowed to meet weekly in their synagogues on the Sabbath.

But Christians and Christianity was not tolerated. So very likely for them to meet weekly like that was not allowed by law. It was illegal. Well, it's no wonder, isn't it, that chapter 10, verse 25 says, some had stopped meeting together.

[14:57] Because they were afraid of the consequences of doing it. And, of course, given that Caesar was worshipped as a god and regarded as divine, well, to be loyal to Jesus as divine, and indeed to Jesus as the only divine man, well, of course, that was treason.

That was a capital crime. So there was huge pressure to conform, to avoid suffering. Just as it is today in many parts of the world. Think of the Christian church in China.

It's only the state-sponsored churches that are allowed to meet together legally. So there's great pressure, of course, isn't there, for Christians in China to make peace with this world and with their rulers.

And for real Christians not to go on meeting in their house churches with their real believers, because of a great threat from the state. That's why we need to pray for Chinese Christians. In the West, of course, where we live, we haven't faced for a long, long time that level of suffering. At least not yet, that persecution from a hostile world.

[16:02] But worldwide today, as a recent report, as you know, has said, 80% of all the major persecution in the world is happening to Christian believers. Great suffering.

And of course, all of us do suffer the shared pains, don't we, of living in this fallen world. We have personal sorrows and sufferings.

And often these things do put great pressure on us as Christian people to doubt the God that we can't see in the face of the sorrows and the sufferings that we can see and we can feel and we can touch and we experience as all too real and present.

Another pressure, I think, which we do share is that of the shame surrounding the gospel. Verse 33 in chapter 10 speaks about public reproach, doesn't it, for belonging to Christ.

That's always a feature of real Christian faith. Moses faced the reproach of Christ, we're told in 11:26. He turned his back on Egypt's treasures because he was looking to the reward, but he knew the reproach.

[17:10] Jesus, chapter 12, verse 2, knew the shame of public execution, but he endured the cross, despising that shame. And all Christians, says the writer, will bear that shame.

Chapter 13, verse 13, we join Jesus outside the camp, bearing the reproach that he endured. If you're a Christian, you will be beyond the pale in the world, in our world, in our culture, in our society, among our contemporaries.

Who of us wants to be the one who's in disgrace with everybody around about us? Publicly bearing the tutting under the breath, the reproach because of our loyalty to Jesus Christ and his gospel and his words and his apostles' words.

If you're a Christian at school, you don't want to be the one who's left out and lampooned, do you? So there's great pressure to give a big body swerve to the SU group of the Christians who meet in the school, to swerve from that shame.

Or you're at work, in the canteen or in the office or whatever it is, and the LGBT rep from Stonewall is getting everybody and then giving them their new rainbow lanyard to wear. Well, there's great pressure, isn't there?

[18:31] Not to even just politely decline and say, no, you wouldn't like to wear that. Because you'll be called a bigot. You'll be called a homophobe.

You'll be called the nasty person, the hateful person. The person who's choosing hate, not love, even though the reverse is actually the truth. Or think about the churchman or the church congregation that wants to be heard by the world and influence the world, doesn't want to be shunned by the world, far less hated by the world.

And so there's huge pressure, let me tell you, to make peace with the world. That's what the mainline Christian churches have done all around our nation, all around the Western world in the last few decades.

And many today who would call themselves evangelical Christians are increasingly seeking peace and appeasement. With the feminist lobby, with the homosexual lobby, now with the genderist lobby.

The pressure to avoid shame is very, very great. The reproach of Jesus Christ is very hard to bear, isn't it? That's why somebody has said, if suffering slays its hundreds, shame slays its thousands.

[19:49] We face great pressure to make peace with the world in the face of suffering and in the face of shame. And thirdly, of course, in face of the pressure of sin.

Up to 12 verse 1 speaks of the sin that clings so closely and hinders our faithful endurance. And it's no accident that if you look down to chapter 13 verses 4 and 5, he mentions there, doesn't he, perhaps two of the strongest pressures that lure Christian believers back into this world.

Sex and money. And he warns the church to keep their lives free from the lure of illegitimate sexual relationships. And from the love of worshipping money.

Well, I can tell you that in my time in ministry, very often it has been one of those two things that I think I've most commonly seen. Dragging people back, professing believers back, away from the Savior.

And away from salvation. Both in church life and, even more sadly, in Christian leadership. It's no accident that all the way through Hebrews, therefore, we are told repeatedly that God is speaking today to us in everything that he writes.

[21 : 09] In fact, it's a striking feature of Hebrews that whenever the Old Testament is quoted by the writer, he doesn't say, as it is written, but he says, as God is saying, present tense. And he ends in chapter 12, verse 25, saying, so we're to see to it that we do not refuse him who is speaking.

Make no mistake, God is speaking to us, to you and me, in this letter. Whoever we are, however long we've been a Christian, however mature we think we are, however in the right place we think we might be as a church.

Don't get sidetracked, by the way, into questions about who he's addressing here. Can these people he's addressing really be properly Christians yet?

Because how can they be at risk? If they are, we know real Christians don't fall away. Or thinking, well, if they are real Christians, well, these warnings can't really be as severe as they look, because, well, Christians can't fall away.

No, no, no, no. He is writing to a real church. He's writing to real Christian brothers. He calls them holy brothers in Christ. And he is saying they are at real risk of falling away.

[22 : 15] He is addressing a real crisis, not an imaginary one. And any Christian leader, in fact, any Christian who's been around for many years, knows that that's the reality of real church life.

People get disillusioned. They drift. And in the end, sadly, they desert the Lord Jesus. And it's always been so.

And it will always be so right to the end. And that is because sin has been real since the very beginning among God's people. And it's because also our salvation is not yet complete until the very end.

Our full salvation still lies in the future. That's the constant message of the New Testament. It's the Lord Jesus who says the one who endures to the end will be saved. And it's a very specific message of Hebrews.

He says we're not yet saved. We're not yet made perfect and complete. We're not yet those who have received the inheritance. We've not yet entered into the rest of God.

[23 : 25] That in chapter 4, he tells us we must strive to enter and not fall back from. Just as he says in chapter 12, we must strive for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Because, you see, full salvation is not something that lies in this world, but in the world to come. And that's what he's speaking about in this letter. He says it explicitly in chapter 2, verse 5.

It's the world to come that we're speaking about. And that gives the whole point, you see, of this word of exhortation. Because it's a repeated call to endure, to persevere, to be those.

As he says in chapter 6, verse 12, who through faith and patience do endure and do inherit the promises at last. Keep running the race to the end with Jesus and through Jesus and to Jesus, who's the great perfecter, the great pioneer who's gone before us.

That's his message. How are we to do that? How are we to be those then who are of faith and who preserve our souls?

[24 : 39] Well, that brings us to the second thing. You see, he's writing to drifting believers who need a real challenge. And Hebrews gives a heartfelt exhortation to the great perseverance that is needed by all Christian believers.

And that challenge comes through both, both the real encouragements and the real warnings of God's word. Because these are the means of grace through which he will bring us to perfection, to completion, to our full salvation of that eternal rest.

If, if today we hear his voice and we heed his voice and don't harden our hearts in disobedience and rebellion against his word, against his leadership of our lives.

Because that, you see, is incompatible with real faith. That's the opposite of faith. Refusing to hear and to heed, to obey God's voice in his word.

That is what unbelief is. Look again at chapter 3, verses 12 to 15. These verses that we read.

Because it's so clear. Who is it? Who is it who falls away?

[25 : 54] Who turns away? Who apostatizes? And will not be saved, according to the writer. Well, verse 12, it's the one who has an evil, unbelieving heart. A heart hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, verse 13.

A rebellious, hardened spirit, verse 15. What does that mean? Look at verse 16. On Moses' day, it was those who heard God's voice and yet rebelled.

Verse 17, who sinned. It was those who disobeyed God's voices, verse 18. It was them that he swore would not enter his race. Rebellious disobedience to God.

Or, verse 19, just to put it another way, they were unable to enter because of unbelief. You see, the disobedience of unbelief is the opposite of the obedience of real faith.

The enduring obedience to God's voice. That is the only faith that saves. Some people get very perturbed. Perhaps you do.

[27 : 04] About these very real and severe warnings of God in Hebrews. And you worry. Well, these warnings, surely they will erode believers' assurance of their salvation. No, no.

Our believer wants to erode all false assurance. Because true assurance of salvation can only be by faith in this world, can't it?

It can't be by sight because we don't yet see the world to come. We don't yet see everything in subjection to him, as he says in chapter 2. We don't see that consummation yet.

So our assurance can only be by faith and by real faith, which is obedient faith. Which is faith that humbly hears and heeds God's word and goes on doing that day after day after day.

You can't possibly have any assurance of salvation without faith. You can't have assurance of salvation if you're living in arrogant, disobedient unbelief.

[28 : 03] How could you? So the writer, you see, is warning us repeatedly. Just as God warned his people all through history repeatedly. Calling them to hear his voice.

Not harden their hearts, but hearken to his word. So look at chapter 3, verse 7. What does he say? The Holy Spirit is still saying today. It's present tense.

Exactly what he said way back in Moses' time. And chapter 4, verse 7. And long afterwards, he's still saying the same thing in David's time. And chapter 4, verse 11.

He's still saying the same thing in our time today. Look, let us strive to enter that rest so that none of us fall by the same sort of disobedience. Because the word of God is still living and active.

No creature is hidden from his sight. God knows, he's saying, whether your heart is really hardened to his word or actually heeding his word. He knows. You can't hide. That's why the apostle James in his letter says, So be doers of the word.

[29 : 06] Not just hearers. Receive with meekness the implanted word. The word ruling your heart and your mind and your soul. That's the word, he says, that's able to save your soul.

That's the faith that saves. Only that faith. So James says, don't deceive yourselves. That's what Hebrews is saying here. Don't deceive yourselves.

You can't deceive God. His word penetrates right to the heart. And we need that challenge, friends. Because some people talk a lot about the word of God. A lot about the preaching of the word of God.

But in fact, when they sit in church on Sundays, they're not actually receiving the word with meekness. They're just reviewing God's word with arrogance in the heart. They're not allowing themselves to be judged by God's word.

They're sitting in judgment on it. And often on the preacher. Well, be careful. If that's your tendency. And it can be a real danger. Particularly among those who have been in church for many, many years.

[30 : 07] Who know a lot. Who consider themselves knowledgeable. Who consider themselves mature. Be careful. Jesus talked about just those kind of people, didn't he? In Matthew chapter 7. There'll be many who know a lot, he says.

And many who show a lot. But on that day of judgment, I'll say to them. I never knew you. Because it's those who do the will of my Father in heaven.

Who enter the kingdom. Who'll be saved on that day. It's those who hear and heed his voice. Those whose hearts are softened and not hardened to God's word.

It's those who show real spiritual fruit. Not just a false spiritual front. Do you see? God's warnings don't destroy the true believer's assurance.

They lead to true assurance. By eroding all that false assurance and presumption. And by waking us up to the deceitfulness of sin in our own hearts. And the danger of drift that we're all in.
[31 : 06] And by driving us once again to listen carefully. And pay more attention to the word of God in Jesus Christ. To pay much closer attention to what we've heard. Lest we should drift away from it.

See the warnings against apostasy. Are the very things that will keep us from apostasy. And lead us on in obedient faith day by day.

So that we do know God's assuring grace. Day by day. One day at a time. You can't have assurance in advance you see.

Only one day at a time. It's like the manna in the wilderness. Do you remember? You had to trust God every new day. And go out and pick your manna for that day. If you tried to store it up for the future. What happened?

The maggots came in. It all rotted. Now it's one day at a time. And it's exactly that way with real faith. You can't decide to have faith today. And expect to have assurance and peace.

[32 : 04] About your salvation forever. If you then keep ignoring God in the future. Here's how John Calvin put it. And surely we're in no doubt. About John Calvin's commitment to God's sovereign election.

And to God's sovereign perseverance of the saints. Here's what he said. Since God never makes an end of speaking. It's not enough to embrace his teaching with a ready mind.

Unless. Unless. We show that we're obedient to him. With the same teachableness tomorrow. And every day. You see?

So if we're to be those who don't shrink back. Into the world. And into destruction. But have enduring faith. The faith that preserves our souls into eternal life. We need the real challenge. We need the piercing discernment. Of the living word of God. In our lives. Day after day. Day. But also. Notice this in chapter 3 verse 13.

[33 : 06] Very carefully. In the midst of all these warnings and exhortations. About God's word. We need the real challenge of God's living word. But also. Notice. Of the living people of God.

Exhort one another. He says. Day by day. Palmer Robertson. Is absolutely spot on. When he says this. The way to avoid falling into the abyss. Of threatening apostasy.

Is not to be found altogether. In individual. Watchfulness. But in the constant concern. Of every believer.

For the other. Because in real life. That's. That's how the word of God. Is really worked into our lives. Isn't it? That's how the word. Bears fruit in us. Because.

We see one another. Responding to God's word. Or. Or perhaps. Refusing God's word. And so. We encourage. We challenge one another. We rebuke one another. So that. As he says in chapter 12.

[34 : 01] So that. We don't let. A root of bitterness. Grow up. In anyone. To lead anyone astray. In the congregation of God's people. On our own.

It's so easy to deceive ourselves. To lull ourselves. Into all kinds of false assurance. To drift very dangerously. But together. That is much much harder.

Together. That's why in chapter 10. He says. Come on. Do not stop. Meeting together. Whatever the cost. You need one another. He says. To stir one another up. To love.

And to good works. You need one another. To hold fast. Together. To your hope. So that you don't. Go on sinning. And drift. And end up in disaster. And so God is saying today.

To us here. Just as he was. To that church then. Take care. All of you. Lest there be in any of you. An evil unbelieving heart. Leading you to fall away. From the living God.

[34 : 56] But exhort one another. Day by day. To keep hearing. And to keep heeding. God's voice. It's a real challenge. One we all need.

For our salvation. See to it. That you do not refuse. Him. Who is speaking. Because that's the only way. To the perseverance. That every true believer.

Needs. But hang on then. Are you saying. That this message of Hebrews. Is just a great moral challenge. To pull ourselves up.

By the bootstraps. To summon the courage. And the strength within. To go on. To keep right on. To the end of the road. With Harry Lauder. And his song. With a big stout heart. For that long steep hill.

Is that what we're saying? No. No. No. Not at all. And that's the third point here. Because he's writing to people. He knows. Are frail flesh.

[35 : 52] And he's writing to give them. A real comfort. Hebrews is full. Of heavenly encouragement. In the great priesthood of Christ. Who is available to all.

To every Christian believer. Yes. Hebrews is full of exhortations. To endure. To persevere. To the end. And that's summed up. At the end of chapter 10.

If you look back there. Where he says that. In the words that we read. In chapter 10. Verse 35. Don't throw away your confidence. Which has great reward. You've need of endurance.

So when you've done the will of God. You may receive. What's been promised. But it's also full. Isn't it? Of great comfort. That will strengthen our confidence.

To endure. Go on. Look at verse 39. He goes right on to say. We are not those. Who shrink back and are destroyed. We are those who believe. And who preserve our souls.

[36 : 48] Notice he doesn't say. With Harry Lauder. We are those with big stout hearts. And we'll race up that hill. He says. But we are those who have.

Faith. Just like all these saints of old. He goes on to speak about. All through chapter 11. Who saw. The invisible God. And who kept listening to his word.

And not listening to the world. Who kept trusting him. And obeying him. Right to the end of their lives. And in many ways. He's saying to us. We are just like them.

We're people of the wilderness. We're strangers and exiles. In this world. And we're traveling on. Still to our home. And our rest. Which is to come. And they kept going by faith.

They kept going by looking to God. Their Savior. Who went before them. And went behind them. For Israel in the wilderness. They had the real presence of God. In touch with them. Through the tabernacle in the midst.

[37 : 47] That gave them a real connection. With the presence of the invisible God. But that tabernacle. With its altar. With its priests. With its sacrifices. That was but a passing prophecy.

Of something far greater. To come. And we. In these last days. We have the fulfillment. Of all of that. And I come in Jesus Christ. We have something far greater.

We have something far better. Another great word of Hebrews. We have the permanent. Present reality. Of God the Son. In the person of Jesus.

Forever. So yes of course. Hebrews is a great exhortation. It's a real challenge. To endurance. We must listen. But at the heart of that challenge.

Is a great comfort. That we can endure. And that we will endure. If we keep looking. Not to ourselves. And our strength. But to our great Savior.

[38 : 46] Jesus Christ. Run the race with endurance. He says in chapter 12 verse 1. Looking to Jesus. As the pioneer. As the great perfecter.

Of your faith. He will lead you on. He will lead you. Without fail. And if the saints of old. Endured to the end. Trusting God. In those distant days. Of promise. Then how much more.

Shall we. Who live in these last days. Of fulfillment. We who are the inheritors. Of such a great salvation. And such a great Savior. We are being led to glory.

Not by Moses. A great man. A faithful servant. Who spoke truly. About things to come. But we are being led by Jesus. The Son of God. Himself. The creator. The sustainer.

Of the whole universe. And Jesus. Is not. A high priest. Just like Aaron. Merely human. He is one. Who can assure us.

[39 : 43] Of complete forgiveness. And fellowship with God. Forever. By the power. We are told. Of his indestructible life. Yes. He is fully human.

He is like us. In every way. Apart from sin. And so he knows. What it is. To be frail. To be mortal flesh. And so he is able. He tells us.

To be a merciful. A faithful high priest. To us. In all the weakness. That we might feel. Along the path. Of life. Jesus holds.

That wonderful priesthood. He. Makes it possible. For us to be forgiven. By God. To draw near to God. Forever. That is one of the great words. Of Hebrews. Forever. Chapter 725.

Jesus priesthood. Continues forever. So he. Is able to save us. To the uttermost. Completely. To perfection. To the end. Forever. All of those.

[40 : 38] Who draw near to God. Through him. And that's the main point. Of my sermon. According to the writer of the Hebrews. The great comfort. That's in Jesus. Whenever I take a.

Preaching class. At Cornhill. I'll say to the person. At the end. Just. Just sum up for me. In one sentence. Your main thing. Well the Hebrews writer. Does that for us.

Explicitly. Just turn lastly. With. With me to chapter 8. Verse 1. The main point. In what I'm saying. Is this. He says. Good news Bible.

The whole point. Of what I'm saying. Is this. What. We have. Such. High. High. Priest. One who's seated. At the right hand.

Of the throne. Of the majesty. In heaven. We have a minister. In the holy places. In the true tabernacle. That the Lord set up. Not man. Do you see what he's saying. That's my whole point.

[41 : 33] We have it all. In Jesus. Everything we need. For life. And godliness. As Peter puts it. Somewhere else. So yes. There are warnings.

There are challenges. All through Hebrews. But the vast bulk. Of his message. Is all focused. On this great. Comfort. And he expands for us.

The glorious reality. Of a savior. Who has loved us forever. In his death. For our sins. On the cross. And who is able. Therefore. To save us. Forever. Through his risen. Right. In life.

Because he's interceding. Always. In heaven. For us. That's my main point. He's saying. Keep looking to him. Jesus alone. Jesus forever. Every exhortation.

In the book. Is based on that. Wonderful encouragement. Every challenge. Is enveloped. With the Christ. That we have. And you see that.

[42 : 29] Very clearly. Even in that. That troubling passage. We quoted from. In chapter three and four. With all those warnings. Not to apostatize. As the Israelites did. That whole discourse. Is held within.

The words. Full of comfort. About our priesthood. In Christ. Chapter two. Verse 17. The merciful. And faithful. High priest. Who is able to help. Those who are being tempted.

All the time. And in chapter four. Verse 14. At the end. About Jesus. The son of God. We don't have a high priest. He says. Who's unable. To sympathize. With our weaknesses. So we can draw near. With confidence. To the throne of grace. To receive. Mercy. And to find. The grace. That we need. In every time of need. There is.

Great. Comfort. For every. Christian believer. In the great. Priesthood of Christ. So friends. We do have need. Of great. Endurance.

[43 : 25] If we're going to receive. What's promised. If we are going to be saved. On the day. When Jesus returns. But we will. We will not be those.

Who shrink back. And are destroyed. And we will be those. Who have faith. And are preserved. If. We just keep. Looking.

To Jesus. The supreme. Son of God. Revealing him to us. The sufficient. Savior. Who has redeemed us. Forever. And we can.

And we must. That's the whole point. Of this book of Hebrews. We have. Such. A high priest. So in the midst of.

Of our. Crises. Whatever they are. Of suffering. The shame. For the gospel. Or the tangle of sin. That so. Greatly.

[44 : 20] Entraps us. So deeply. Entraps some of us. In the midst of all of that. He's saying to us. We have a savior. Who loves us forever. And who is able.

To save us forever. And we will endure. And we will. Endure forever. Forever. If we just keep. Keep. One another.

Looking to Jesus. And following Jesus. Forever. If we keep drawing near to him. Together. We will find. All the mercy.

All the grace. That we need. In every time of need. Right to the very end. Jesus alone. Jesus forever. That's.

What this writer here. Wants us to be exhorting. And encouraging. One another with. Every day. Day after day. And every week. Week after week. Until the very end of our lives. Or until Jesus comes.

[45 : 16] Because that's the only way. To truly. Unwavering faith. That leads. Certainty.

With certainty. To that. Unshakable kingdom. So I hope that as we study this book together. We will become. Better. At exhorting one another.

With these wonderful things. Day. After day. After day. Amen. Let's pray together. Amen. Amen. O God. The protector of all.

Who trust in thee. Without whom none are strong. None are holy. Increase and. Multiply upon us. Thy mercy.

That thou being our ruler and guide. We may. So pass through the temporal things of this world.
That we finally lose not. the eternal things the world to come grant us heavenly father these things
for the sake of Jesus Christ our great high priest Amen