

A Call to Enduring Worship

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[0 : 00] And we're going to turn now to our Bibles and to our reading for this morning, which is in Hebrews chapter 10. Recent weeks we've been going through these great middle chapters of Hebrews where the Apostle is explaining what it means that Christ was made perfect.

That is, he became the perfect sacrifice for sins. And therefore he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him because he has been designated by God a high priest like Melchizedek, a priest forever through whom we come to God.

And now verse 19 begins with a great therefore. Therefore in the light of all that he's explained and he summarizes in the first two verses.

And then tells us what it means for us in real life, how we're to live, what we're to do. And what this worship of God that we've been liberated for through Jesus Christ is to look like in these last days that we are living in.

So therefore brothers and sisters, it means since we have confidence, authorization to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way.

[1 : 20] That is a new way that leads to life that he has opened for us through the curtain. That is by means of his flesh. And since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near.

It's a present continuous tense there. Let us keep on drawing near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. With our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us keep on holding fast the confession of our hope without wavering. For he who promised is faithful. And let us go on considering one another.

How to stir up one another to love and good works. Not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some. But encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.

[2 : 27] But a fearful expectation of judgment. And a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries, the enemies. Anyone who set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has spurned, has trampled on the Son of God. And has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified.

And has outraged the spirit of grace. For we know him who has said, vengeance is mine, I will repay. And again, the Lord will judge his people.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But recall former days. When after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings.

Sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction. And sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison.

[3 : 37] And you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property. Since you knew that you yourselves had a better position. An abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence.

Which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance. So that when you have done the will of God. You may receive what is promised.

For yet a little while. And the coming one will come. And not delay. And 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 us his word. Well do turn if you would to Hebrews chapter 10. And the second half of the chapter which we read together.

[4 : 44] And a passage that begins. Therefore since we have confidence. Let us. Let us draw near. Verse 22. Let us hold fast. Verse 23.

Let us stir up. Verse 24. This is a call. To enduring worship. That is. It is a call to real Christian faith. And in that regard. It encapsulates really the whole of the message of Hebrews. The writer himself says in chapter 13. He has written a word of exhortation. Why do his hearers need that?

Well. As we know. They are under pressure. Look at verse 32. It suggests that the hardships he has spoken of in the past. Are once again upon them. They were not yet facing.

Martyrdom. For their faith. Chapter 12. Verse 4 says that. But as chapter 13. It makes clear. As we will see when we come to it. And as these verses here make clear. They were.

[5 : 43] Many of them. Being mistreated. For Christ's sake. Some of them were facing prison. Some of them. Other things. And that is very hard. And so there was a real danger.

Of drift. That is what he talks about. In chapter 2. Of neglecting. Such a great salvation. Of falling away. From. The living God.

That was the warning. Wasn't it? In chapter 3. And remember he said. We share in Christ. If indeed. We hold our original confidence. Firm to the end.

And so the call to endure. is the main thrust. Of this whole sermon. That Hebrews gives us. In 13 chapters. Now that might not seem terribly exciting.

But friends. In the face of the reality. Of all the real pressures. Of this world. The simple endurance. Of real faith. Is. The supreme testimony.

[6 : 43] To the power of God. At work in this world. And at work. In our feeble lives. That's why the testimony. At a funeral service. Often is so powerful. Isn't it? The testimony.

Of someone who has stood. To the last. For Jesus Christ. It's so powerful. Because it's hard. To do that. And the exhortation. To endure.

In Hebrews. Is based. Of course. On the wonderful. Encouragement. Of what we have. And of what we know. In the Lord. Jesus Christ. We have. In these last days.

God's final word. To man. In him. And we have God's. Finished work. For man. Through him. All his promises. Are being fulfilled.

In him. And Jesus. Is the mediator. We're told. Of the new. Eternal covenant. In which God. Has forever. Drawn near to us. So that we.

[7 : 36] Can. As we've sung. Forever. Draw near. To him. In the fellowship. Of restored fellowship. That's made possible. Forever. Through the forgiveness. Of our sins.

Christ. Our high priest. Has done what. What no. Earthly priest. No earthly sacrifice. Could ever do. Because as we've seen. In chapters 9 and 10.

He himself. Became. The perfect priest. And he offered himself. As the perfect. Sacrifice. Nothing. In the old order. At all. Even God's.

Own. Given religion. Nothing. Could bring. Forgiveness. Of sins. Chapter 10. Verse 1. Says it very plainly. Nothing there. Could perfect.

The worshippers. Those who are drawing near. But Jesus did. What no. Animal sacrifice. Could ever do. Do you remember. Chapter 9. Verse 14. Summed it up so well.

[8 : 30] He purifies. He purges. Our conscience. From. Works. That lead to death. For. Serving. The living God. Worshipping. Truly.

At last. He has once for all. Cleansed our sins. Through his blood. Which atones. And therefore. He has forever. Consecrated us.

For real service. Real worship. Through his body. Offered. To sanctify us. Last time we looked. Chapter 10. Verse. 14.

For by a single offering. He has perfected. For all. Time. Those. Who are being sanctified. His saints. Through Christ's body.

And through his blood. Were cleansed from sin. And were consecrated. For service. Were rescued from wrath. And were restored. For worship.

[9 : 26] He. Therefore. Is able to save. To the uttermost. Remember chapter 7. Those who draw near. To God. Through him. And therefore. As we saw last time.

As chapter 10. Verse 9. Puts it. Christ's finished work. Has abolished. The entire. Old order. Of earthly religion. Of sacrifices. And offerings for sin. That verse 8.

Is speaking about there. The worship. Of all earthly religion. And he has abolished it. In order. To establish. Verse 9. What God. Actually wants.

For human beings. Doing. His holy. And heavenly will. Imaging. The pure glory. Of God. In this world. And through Jesus.

And through our. Union with him. His perfect life. Offered. Sanctifies us. He came. To do.

[10:19] The will of God. So that he might lead. Many brothers and sisters. To glory. To share. In that glorious. Restored life. So that. Look at verse 36. Of chapter 10.

So that. When we. Have done the will of God. We may receive. What's promised. The blood of. Of his eternal covenant. As chapter 13.

Puts it. In the letter's final word. The blood of the eternal covenant. Equips us. To do his will.

Working in us. All that is pleasing. In God's sight. Through Jesus Christ. So that we.

Can bring. Glory to God. Forever. In our renewed lives. No wonder he calls it. Such a great salvation. We've been rescued. From the disaster.

From the destruction. Of sin. And into. The destiny. Of our eternal service. Worshipping the living God. Forever.

[11:12] And ever. From the disobedience. Of unbelief. That leads to death. To the obedience of faith. That leads to life everlasting. And that's what these great. Central chapters of Hebrews.

That we've been studying together. That's what they're telling us. A great revelation. Has come at last. In these last days. Through Jesus. And a great redemption. Has been won.

At last. In these last days. Through Jesus. Our great savior. But that means of course. That there is still for us. A great race to run. We must run.

With endurance. With Jesus. In whom. And with whom. God is perfecting us. Forever. Like him.

And we have such great privileges.

In these last days. And those privileges. And those privileges. Therefore. Have to translate. Into practice. Our access. To worship. In Christ. Must become.

[12:07] Actual worship. In Christ. God's revelation. Of truth. To us. Must become. A real response. Of truth. In us. Christ. In us.

So just as. As chapter 7 to 10. Were bracketed. At the beginning. By those strong warnings. And encouragements. That we saw. In chapter 6. Well so it is at the end. Here in verses 19 to 39.

Of chapter 10. The same encouragements. And warnings. And the whole section. Is an exhortation. It's a. A call. To enduring worship. It's a call.

To be. Truly Christian people. Right to the end. And as we'll see. That is something. None of us. Can do. On our own. You'll notice.

All the way through. It's we. And us. And one another. Well we can look at it. In the three natural sections. That it falls into. First. There's an exhortation. Based on the privilege. Of Christian worship.

[13:01] In these last days. And then there's a warning. About the perils. Of Christian worldliness. In these last days. And then finally. There's an encouragement. To persevere.

In Christian witness. In these last days. Look at. Verses 19 to 25. Which exhort all Christians. To take very seriously. The privilege. Of our Christian worship.

In these last days. He's telling us. Our greater access. To God. Through the finished work. Of Christ. For man. In these last days. It calls for.

A greater appropriation. Of these wonderful. Provisions. Of our. New covenant faith. So. We must. Go on. Embracing.

The way. Of true worship. The way that's opened up. Through Christ. And through which. We have fellowship. With God. Now. In the invisible world. And. A future.

[13:56] With God. Forever. In the world. To come. First word. Therefore. Brothers. Brothers and sisters. Since. That. That clearly reminds us. Doesn't it. That.

That. That. That. All. His. His. Exhortations. Are based. On the exposition. That goes before. All the covenant commands. Of God. Always follow. The covenant grace. Of God. All the imperatives.

The things we must do. Always follow. The indicatives. The thing that God. Has done. And verses. 19 to 21. Sum up. The much more. Of grace.

That. That we already have. In the new covenant. That's what. All these central chapters. Have been about. We have. Confidence. He says. To enter. The holy places.

That word. Confidence. Has a real. Objective sense. To it. You could say. Since we have. Authorized access. Fully authorized access. As in London.

[14:50] Last week. And I was coming back. Through the airport. And I saw lots. And lots. Of doors. In the airport. That had big signs. On them. Saying authorized. Personnel only. You've seen them. Haven't you? That's what he's saying.

Authorized personnel. You have. Authorized access. Through this door. The door. Into the holiest place. The very presence of God. Not. Not the mere.

Earthly. Holy place. Of the temple. Which even then. No one had access to. But once a year. But into heaven itself. And we have it. He says in verse 19. By means of the blood of Jesus.

And verse 20. By means of the body. The flesh. Of Jesus Christ. That's what we've been seeing. We have his cleansing blood. And his sanctifying body. His total obedience to God.

In life and death. We have the perfect sacrifice. Which has opened forever. Verse 20. The door. A new and living way. Better to put that.

[15:43] The new way. The way of life. The way of eternal life. In his eternal kingdom. The way through the curtain. Remember he's spoken about that before.

In chapter 6. That enters into the inner place. Behind the curtain. Where Jesus has gone. As a forerunner for us. We have the perfect sacrifice.

Once made. And therefore we also have. Verse 21. The perfect priest. Forever. A great priest. Over the household of God.

To which we belong. And he ever lives. To make intercession. For us. Remember he said that. And therefore since that is so. The vast privileges. That are now ours.

In these last days. They confer upon us. Very great responsibilities. Remember chapter 3. When he spoke about this. If Jesus. Is so much greater than Moses. As the son.

[16:38] Is so much greater than the servant. In the house. The priest king. Who rolls over. All his people now. Then. What's his message. You better listen to his voice. Aren't you. Don't harden your heart.

To his voice. You can't neglect. These great responsibilities. That we now have. In this new covenant. Of eternal significance. Everything now.

Is far. Far more serious. Than it ever was before. It's very important. For us as Christians. To be clear on that. The greater grace.

That we have. Through Jesus. Does not mean. That any of us. Can ever presume. Upon God. God. Don't ever. Don't ever. Don't ever. Misunderstand.

Grace alone. Because the Bible. Teaches very plainly. That God's grace. That saves us. Is never alone. It always makes. Absolute. Demands. Upon us. Hence.

[17:33] The far greater warnings. In the new covenant. As we'll come to. Verse 26. But here in verses 22 to 25. There are three commands. From the apostle. Which are.

The demands. That God makes. Of his new covenant. People in Christ. This is what it means. To show. Real faith. Penitent faith. Faithfulness. This is what.

Doing the word. Looks like. To use the language. That James uses. Not just looking in the mirror. And forgetting it. And each of them. You'll see. Is in the present tense. You could translate it.

Well. You must keep on. Drawing near. Keep on. Confessing. Keep on. Considering one another. Real faith. Is real. And enduring. It's constantly.

Acted upon. And. It's enduring. Constantly. Oriented. Upwards. Towards God. In faith. And forwards. Towards glory.

[18:30] In hope. And outwards. Towards one another. In love. That's what he's saying here. So the real worship. That we've been redeemed for. In Christ. Has begun now. And we must keep on.

Applying the gospel. To our actual lives. In all these ways. So first. In verse 22. He's saying. We must keep. Our true gospel assurance.

Keep on. Drawing near to God. Through Christ alone. Keep on. Consciously. Acting on. The complete. Cleansing. And consecration. That's ours. Through his body.

And blood. We are. Truly cleansed. And renewed. We are. Sprinkled. Not. With the blood. And the water. Of the old covenant. That he spoke about. In chapter 9. Verses 19 and 20.

But with the ultimate reality. That the ceremony. That's. Described there. Is foreshadowing. And talking about. The death of Jesus. For our full salvation.

[19 : 23] Fully sufficient. Forever. And the point is. That Jesus. Brings us to God. With absolute. Assurance. And Jesus alone. Only what he has done.

Once and for all. Can assure us. Of our access to God. Nothing else can. Nothing ever can. But of course. It's also true. Isn't it? That.

That our continuing. Actually drawing near to God. And listening to his voice. And communing with him in prayer. Only that will actually. Keep us assured.

Of our access to him. That's right. Isn't it? It's very practical. If you begin to neglect. The privileged excess. That you have. Then you'll become less assured.

Of his fatherly care. And then the less. You'll feel able. To draw near to him. We have vicious circle. A downward spiral. But as we've seen.

[20 : 18] We've got to keep. Our gospel assurance. By keeping on. Drawing near. Through Jesus. And what he's done alone. Not. Not putting up barriers. That God has already removed.

We put up. Religious barriers. To our Christian life. That is to dismantle. The very. That is to put back. The very things that God has dismantled. And destroyed.

So sometimes people are drawn. To visible. Tangible. Religious things. Because. They find them more assuring. That somebody may say to you.

Well I. I find it much more assuring. To go to a priest. To give my confession. And then to say the prayers. And the liturgies. That he gives me. Because that makes me feel assured. Well friend.

If you're doing that. To make you feel assured. You will destroy your assurance. Ultimately.

Because you are. Destroying the very heart. Of the gospel. You're not drawing nearer. To God. By that. You're distancing yourself.

[21 : 14] By putting barriers. Back. In between you and God. That God has taken away. Or you're doing the very same thing. If you begin to think that. Well we need to have.

Long long times. Of singing. And singing. And singing particular kinds of songs. To get us. Into the worship. To really draw near. And experience. The presence of God in Christ.

What are you doing? You're putting barriers. Between you. And the intimacy. With your heavenly father. That Jesus came to move away. And get rid of forever. If you think.

At times. That you can't pray. Or you can't come to church. You can't go to a bible study. Because you're out of sorts. Spiritually. Or because. You've failed in something.

Or because you've got a guilty conscience. Then you're putting up barriers. Again. That Jesus has taken away. Because you're saying. That you approach God.

[22 : 14] On the basis of your performance. But Jesus has come. So that you approach God. Only. Because of your position in Christ. That he has won for you. For all time.

So we must keep on. Drawing near. In full assurance. Of faith. Anything less than that. Is to deny. And to diminish. The cross of Jesus Christ. We must keep.

Our gospel assurance. And second verse 23. We must keep. Our true gospel anchor. We're to keep. Holding fast.

The confession. Of our hope. That is. We're to confess. We're actually to live. Out. In practice. And exhibit. The reality. Of our hope.

That is. That our life. Is invested. Not in this passing world. But in the world to come. Where he who has promised. Is faithful. That we have an eternal future.

[23 : 09] In Jesus Christ. Now as I said. He's picking up here. On what he said. In chapter 6. About the hope. That anchors our life. Here in this world. In all the storms. And currents.

Which otherwise. Would bring us to shipwreck. We have an anchor. Beyond the curtain. Well an anchor is tested. In the time of storms.

Isn't it? There'll be a lot of ships. Anchors being tested. This weekend. With storm Dennis. Out in the sea. And our confession. Of our hope. Is tested. When this world.

Rocks us. When our expectations. For life. Are not met. When they disappoint us. When the possessions. That we had hoped for. In this life. Don't materialize.

That's when we see. Isn't it? Whether we really believe. Verse 34. That we have far better. Abiding possessions. Still to come. And those are the things. That really matter to us.

[24 : 04] That's when that's tested. And yet. All over the world today. There are Christians being taught. And there are Christians believing. That the gospel. Is really the answer for things. In this world. God. Well what happens.

If you don't get. In this earthly life. The things that you long for. And dream for. The possessions that you want. Might be the profession.

That you. Have trained for. And wanted to have. Might be the partner in life. That you've longed for. Might be the progeny. The children. In your marriage. That you've longed for.

And you haven't had. Hundreds of other things. But you see. He is saying. Our anchor. Is not in this world. It's in the world to come. That's what this gospel is about.

It's the world to come. That we're speaking about. He said in chapter 2 verse 5. It's an eternal salvation. Christ has won for us. Chapter 5 verse 9. We are saved in hope.

[25 : 01] Of better promises. Of a better country. Of an eternal city. If the Christian faith. If the Christian faith. Gave us everything. That we ever hoped for.

Or needed in this life. We wouldn't need any hope. Would we? That's the tragedy. You see. Of the prosperity gospel. That is so rife. All over the world today. It's not always just in its crassest sense. Where you're told you'll be rich. If you do this. That and the other. And it's sort of physical riches. Often it's much more subtle. It's softer. There are many many Christians today.

Sitting in church this morning. And the message they're hearing is that. The Christian faith will give you well-being. In this world. That is not the Christian gospel.

We are to keep on living out our true confession. That our anchor. Is in the better promises. Of the great reward. Of a full salvation. That is still to come. It's the things yet unseen.

[26 : 00] We are to keep our true gospel anchor. In the world to come. And our true gospel assurance. Of our access to the world that is invisible.

The world above. Of God our Father. And thirdly. You see in verse 24. He says we have to keep our gospel adornment. Keep considering one another. And to stir one another up.

To love and good deeds. The Bible's teaching is very plain. Isn't it? If we are truly living in touch. With the reality of God above in heaven. And of the reality of the world to come. In glory.

Then the expression of that reality now. In this world. Will be bountiful love and good. From the people of the Lord.

Who are praying. I will be done on earth. Now. Even as it is in heaven. Through us. In our lives. Real faith is always at work. Through love.

[26 : 55] That's what Paul says to the Galatians. And that's crucial. Isn't it? Especially when the church is under pressure. Especially when it's enduring attack. That's especially when the world must see.

The love of heaven. Here on earth. Through us. Not returning hatred with hatred. And notice he says. That is something impossible. For you to do on your own.

We need one another. He says. Hence verse 25. You can't neglect it. You've got to go on. Meeting together. You must have that mutual encouragement. One scholar.

Makes. Very helpful. I think. Interesting observation. That the pattern described here. In verses 19 to 25. Seems to mirror that. Of the. The pattern of the Old Testament. Peace and fellowship offerings.

Those are the offerings that took place. After the sin offerings. That made atonement for sin. You can read about it. Maybe in. Exodus 24. And other places. And God's people. Drew together. In his presence.

[27 : 54] To bring these fellowship offerings. And to remember his goodness. And rejoice in his presence. Of fellowship restored. Because sin had been covered. And the thing about these peace and fellowship offerings.

Was it was impossible. To offer one of those offerings. On your own. It's something that had to be done together. With the Lord's people. You meet together. With the Lord's people.

In mutual encouragement. In stimulus. To faith. And to obedience. And to rejoicing. In fellowship in the Lord. Well that's exactly what it is here. Whether it's patterned on that or not.

The great privilege of Christian worship. In these last days. Is that we can go on. Being. Together. Encouraged. In the presence of the Lord Jesus.

And we can't neglect one another. We must meet together. If we're to keep our gospel assurance. If we're to keep our gospel anchor. If we're to keep our gospel adornment of love.

[28 : 51] We need one another. If we neglect meeting together. If we don't encourage one another. We are neglecting such a great salvation.

Is what he's saying. No. He says the opposite. You need to encourage one another. All the more. As you see the day approaching. The nearer you get to the coming of Jesus. The new covenant demands.

Are far more urgent. Even than the old. And of course. That is because. The approaching day. That he's speaking about. Is not only the great day. Of everlasting salvation.

It is also. The great day. Of everlasting judgment. Hence what follows. In verses 26 to 31. William Lane.

The scholar. Puts it this way. The measure of privilege. Distinguishing the people. Of the new covenant. From those who lived under. The old covenant. Necessarily defines. The extent of the peril.

[29 : 48] To which those who spurn. The benefits of the new covenant. Expose themselves. And that's why you see. Verses 26 to 31. Give a warning.

About the perils. Of Christian worldliness. In these last days. A greater. Revelation of God. Through his final word. To man. In Jesus Christ.

In these last days. It calls for a far. Greater retribution. In the fearful. Punishment. For a new covenant. Unfaithfulness. That's what he's saying. So you must stop.

Embracing the ways. Of the world. The ways we've been. Separated from. Through Christ.

Otherwise. We will. Ourselves. Make ourselves. Enemies of him. Now.

And. We'll exclude. Ourselves. Ultimately. From his presence. In the world. To come. Now. This passage. Is very similar. To. To the passage. Of warning.

[30 : 44] In chapter 6. And I dealt there. Quite extensively. With all the issues. That people find. Very difficult. With this. So if you. Didn't hear that. Or if you want to. Ask some of those questions. I point you to that. Go and listen to that again.

But the message here. Is very. Very clear. Isn't it? This is a real warning. To a real church. About real judgment. I'll say it again.

A real warning. To a real church. About real judgment. Verse 26. If. Having received. The knowledge of the truth. And read. 1 and 2.

Timothy and Titus. That's a phrase used repeatedly. To mean. Real. Christian conversion. If. Then. You go on. Sinning deliberately. And he's meaning.

They're not. The many lapses. And the mistakes. That we all make. And so on. He's speaking there. About clear. Turning away. Deliberately. From your Christian profession. A deliberate rejection. Of the truth. Then.

[31 : 39] Verse 27. There can only be. A fearful expectation. Of judgment. Because he says. You've made yourself. An enemy of God. An adversary. That was the.

That was the pattern. Of covenant. Rejection. Under the old covenant. Verse 28. If you set aside. The law of Moses. It was such. A serious matter. That's why you needed.

At least two or three witnesses. Not just one. Because it was such. A serious matter. And it carried. A penalty of death. You can read about it. In Deuteronomy. Chapter 7. Chapter 17.

Somebody. Turning away. From the living God. To idols. To following. False gods. And it carried. A death penalty. Well. Look at verse 29. How much worse.

Punishment. Is. Deserved. By the one. Who does that. Now. Rejecting. A far. Greater. Salvation. A far. Greater. Privilege. Of God's.

[32 : 36] Complete. Revelation. In the person. Of his son. That's what Jesus. Taught. Wasn't it? Remember his parable. Of the talents. In Luke chapter 20. They rejected. All the servants. Of the master.

And in the end. They rejected. Even his son. And that could mean. Only one thing. Absolute. Judgment. According to Jesus. Because you've spurned.

Literally here it says. To trample over. The son of God himself. You've profaned. His precious blood. Of the covenant. By which you are sanctified. You've outraged.

His own. Holy spirit. Of grace. And that cannot do anything else. But to. Place you among those. Who have made themselves. Adversaries.

Enemies of God. Those who hate him. Those who want to destroy him. And you need to know then. Verse 30. Don't you? God's. Judgment.

[33 : 30] Is real. And terrible. And that is what is coming soon. He says. The eternal judgment. Which is eternally real. And eternally terrible. And what he's saying is.

That we as the Christian church. In these last days. With all these extraordinary. Greater privileges. Than any age that's gone before. We need that warning. We need it.

These Christians were beginning to drift. And that drift. He's already told us. We'll need to neglect. To not listening to God's word. And to not doing God's will. And that kind of disobedience.

In the end. If it's not checked. It will lead. To unmitigated disaster. Disaster you have chosen for yourself. And brought upon yourself. It is a fearful thing.

Verse 31. A fearful thing. To fall into the hands of the living God. In judgment. And a more fearful thing.

[34 : 28] And a more terrible thing. For those who have had that greater privilege. And that greater experience. Of the knowledge of the truth. No getting away from it. Some said Jesus will be beaten with many blows.

Because of what they've been given. And that is a real warning friends. To you and to me. To all of us. And he gives it to us. So that we will not.

Fall to these dangers. So that we'll be on our guard against them. So we will not fall prey to these perils. Don't get sidetracked into speculation. He does not write this. To tie us up in endless fruitless speculations.

About whether believers can be saved or not. Or whether he's talking to real believers or not. Or any of that stuff. He writes this. To tether us. You and me. In that eternal salvation. So we will not be lost.

But we have to heed the warnings. There's a warning here for every single professing Christian. Do not drift. How will you escape if you neglect such a great salvation?

[35 : 33] Sometimes if things have been hard for us. Sometimes if we're discouraged. Sometimes if we've fallen into sin. If we feel we're losing the battle. Or we're just cast down. We want to withdraw, don't we?

And we think to ourselves. I just can't go to church. Or I just can't go to the growth group. I can't go to Tron Youth. I can't go to release the word. He says to us.

That is the wrong thing. That's the worst thing you can do. Don't neglect meeting together. If you start neglecting. And rejecting therefore Christ's people.

You are neglecting and rejecting Christ. You're on the road to becoming an enemy of Christ. If you do that. Don't drift that way. Don't stop meeting together. However you're feeling. Don't side with those who are enemies of Jesus Christ.

Enemies of your real brothers. Don't stand with the world. When you're tempted to do that. To avoid the stigma of Christ. In your office. In your classroom.

[36 : 36] In your family. When it's easier to do that. Fail to stand with the least of these my brothers. Says Jesus on judgment day. And you fail to stand with me. You put yourselves among the enemies.

Friends. The way to becoming friends. With the enemies of Christ's people. Is the way to becoming an enemy yourself. And that is the way that leads to the horror of verse 31.

It's a warning for every professing Christian today. There's a warning also for every church. For all of us together. Because what he's saying is. We all bear responsibility for one another. That's what verse 25 makes so clear.

Isn't it? To stir one another up to the good. To keep one another from that danger. The New Testament is full of warnings like that. To restore the one who's trapped in sin.

Galatians 6 verse 1. To bring back the wanderers. James 5 verse 19. To snatch out of the flames. Out of the fire. Jude verse 23.

[37 : 37] Because the stakes are so high. They are eternal. Eternal. This is forever things we're talking about. Fearful judgment. Forever judgment. None of us can be presumptuous.

No individual Christian. No church fellowship. If somebody's drifting away. If somebody's not around. If they've not come to your group for a few weeks. If they're not coming to church.

Don't just say. Oh they're having a bit of a phase. They're having a bit of a backsliding phase at the moment. No. It's a perilous path they're on. It's a path back into the world.

Into the world that is going to be destroyed forever and ever. That's the road they're on. So we need the warning. Don't we? For ourselves. And for others.

And we need to act on those warnings. For ourselves. But also for others. Snatch them back. It's a real warning. To real Christians. Real churches. About the perils.

[38 : 34] Of worldliness. The powerful lures that can make us drift back. Make us enemies of Christ. And ultimately. Exclude us from him forever.

It's a real warning. But it comes. Doesn't it? In the midst of real encouragement. And that's where the passage ends. Verse 32 to the end.

With a warm encouragement. The perseverance. Of Christian witness. In these last days. He's saying that our greater possession from God. Through this final word.

Of his finished work in Christ. In these last days. That it calls for greater perseverance. As we look to the glorious prize. Of new covenant faithfulness. So we can go on embracing.

The way of obedience. Of the will of God. Right to the end. We can do it. Knowing that it. Yes. It brings reproach now. But it brings great reward. In the end. When he comes.

[39 : 31] And he is coming. He says. Soon. He won't delay. So to encourage. You see. And to encourage his readers. In the present. He points them both to the past. And to the future. In verse 32 to 34.

He reminds them of their past resoluteness. When they first responded. To the gospel's enlightenment. With real faith. It was real. Because it endured. Hard struggle and suffering. Verbal insults.

Public reproach. And violence too. Afflictions. And they suffered. And they shared. With others who were suffering. Those who were in prison. They were partners with them.

They were in fellowship with them. It's the word. That's what real Christian fellowship is. It's not sharing a cup of tea. With other Christians. It's sharing the cutting tongue. That lashes other Christians.

When they're under the cosh. It's not just spending time together. With other Christians. It's sharing trouble together. With other Christians. That's real fellowship. Isn't it? And they did that. Verse 34.

[40 : 27] Even losing their own possessions. With joy. Even facing prison. Why? Because they were anchored. In their future hope. They were living out. That real confession of hope.

In a better possession to come. The treasures in heaven. That Jesus spoke about. That moth and rust. Can't destroy. That thieves can't steal. But now you see.

In their present struggles. They seem to be throwing it all away. How could such stalwart faithful Christians.

Seem to be giving it all up? Well that's the real world friends. Isn't it? It happens. Sometimes it's just.

Time isn't it? And fatigue. We've gone through so much. And then something comes. It's just the last straw. Think about the apostle Paul. Read. Read what Paul says.

[41 : 23] In 2 Corinthians 11 and 12. In chapter 11. It is astonishing. To read about Paul's resilience. It tells us he was beaten. He was stoned. He was shipwrecked. He was adrift in the sea.

He was robbed. He was starved. He was exposed. Everything. It goes on and on and on. And you think. This man was as hard as nails. And then you read on into chapter 12. And he speaks of this. Mysterious thorn in the flesh. Which nearly floored him. Nearly broke him. It was too much. He said. Lord this is too much. I can't stand this anymore.

You've got to take it away. And God said no. And it nearly floored the apostle Paul. Until he learned that in his weakness. God's greatest strength was manifest.

And it can be very very hard. Even great Christian leaders like that. That people think. Are unbelievably resilient. People who have often withstood great battles. Great pressures.

[42 : 23] Great things. But they can get to the point of verse 35 here. When they just want to throw in the towel. When it's too much. It might just be a comment.

From somebody. That is just the last straw. Or it might just be one. Disappointment in yourself. Or in somebody else. Who disappoints you. Might be a prayer.

That just. Doesn't seem to have been answered. It might be. Might be an illness. In a loved one. It might be some kind of loss. It could be anything. Whatever it is. But you just say. That's it. I can't take anymore.

I've had enough. And the Lord says. No. Don't throw in the towel. You may be on the ropes.

But you're not yet on the canvas. And you won't be. You've endured before. Remember. Remember the past. And remember the future. He says. There's a great reward coming.

[43 : 17] He's saying here. Remember exactly what Jesus said. In Matthew 5. On the Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are you. When others revile you. And persecute you. And slander you. On my

account. Rejoice. And be glad.

Because so they persecuted. The prophets who were before you. Remember the past. What you are going through. He says. Is the mark of real. Enduring. Saving faith. And remember the future. For great is your reward in heaven. Well it's the same here. Verse 35. Great is the reward. And God has promised it. For those who endure.

When you've endured. Doing the will of God. Not the will of the hostile world. But the will of God.

You will receive. What's promised. The promised eternal. Inheritance.

It's redeemed. And it's there for you. And that's what real faith is. He is telling us. Real saving faith.

Look at verse 38. It's the opposite. Of shrinking back.

[44 : 14] Into the way. Of being at peace. With this world. That's not pleasing. To God. He says. God takes no pleasure. In Christians. Who appease the world.

God takes no pleasure. In churches. That want to appease. The world. And the culture. That is not our calling. Look at verse 39. We are not those. Who shrink back.

To appease the world. And therefore are destroyed. Don't miss the reminder. Of real judgment.

Think of Lot's wife. That's what Jesus said. Remember her. Whoever seeks.

To preserve their life. Like that. Said Jesus. Will lose everything. Like she did. But no. He says. We are those. Who have faith. And preserve. Our souls.

For eternal life. Notice the implication. What he's teaching us. About what real. Saving faith is. Saving faith.

[45 : 08] Is not just saying. The right things. About Jesus. And the gospel. Is it? It's standing. For Jesus. And the gospel. When the chips are down. When you feel like.

Shrinking back. And giving up. When you feel like. Throwing in the towel. And saying. Oh. Let the world. Just accept me. Because there's so much. Reproach. So much. Loss.

So much. Struggle. To follow Jesus. When it's costly. To follow Jesus. And when it's hard. To do the will of God. When the will of the world.

And when the will of your own flesh. Is diametrically opposed. To the will of God. It's jolly hard. But Jesus says. My mother. And sister. And brothers. Are those who. Hear the word of God.

And. Do it. Stand for me. Don't just speak about me. Real faith. He is telling us.

[46 : 04] Means. Real faithfulness. Endurance. In the will of God. That's what it meant. In Habakkuk. The prophets say. That he quotes there. Waiting for the promise of God.

To be fulfilled. How much more. Then for us. Whose privilege. Of Christian worship. In these last days. Is so. Much. Greater. Then the perils of worldliness.

Are great. They're dangerous. But we can. And we must. Persevere. In our witness. To the very end. With real faith. Not throwing away.

Our confidence. Not shrinking back. Into the world. But enduring. With obedient faith. Doing. The will of God. And friends. We will be.

The people of faith. Like that. Who preserve our souls. If. Together. We do not neglect. Meeting with one another.

[47 : 03] But instead. We go on. Encouraging one another. And all the more. As we see the day approaching. As we keep on. Drawing near to God. In true faith.

Keeping our gospel assurance. And we keep on. Living out. That eternal hope. Keeping our gospel. Anchor. In the world to come. Not this world. As we keep on.

Striving together. In love. To keep our. Gospel adornment. In this world. No matter what the world. Throws at us. We will persevere.

If we just do. What he's commanding us. To do. Because that's the will of God. For us. In these last days. That's real Christian. Worship. That's real.

Christian faith. So let's keep one another. Keeping on. Drawing near. To God our Father in heaven. And looking forward.

[47 : 59] To the glory of the world to come. Even as we spur one another on. To love. And to good deeds. Day by day. And week by week.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father. Father. We thank you. For your words of gracious. Warning. Not to fall away.

From the living God. But to exhort one another. Every day. As long as it's called today. That none of us. May be hardened. By the deceitfulness. Of sin. Thank you Lord.

For the reminder. That we share in Christ. If indeed. We hold fast. Our original confidence. Firm to the end. So help us Lord. To do that.

Help us to be. Continually. Helping one another. And if we're tempted. To shrink back. If we're tempted to. Distance ourselves. To hide. To drift away.

[48 : 57] Draw us back. And may there be. Committed. Brothers and sisters. Around us. To draw us back. To rescue us. To remonstrate with us.

To drag us. Kicking and screaming. If need be. Out of the fire. That together. On the day of your appearing. You may find us.

In the place of faith. And in the place of great safety. Forever. Thank you Lord. For your promises to us. Help us to receive them.

For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.