**Fixing Our Hearts on Jesus**

**Encouragement to Persevere**

**Hebrews 10:26-39**

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It’s good to be back in our study of the book of Hebrews, **fixing our hearts on Jesus** with a goal toward **Encouragement to Persevere** in the faith once and for all delivered to the saints.

The text that we are about to walk through is filled with encouragement to persevere while also giving the consequences for not. That is to say, not persevering in your faith in will inevitably lead to apostasy or a falling away from Faith in Christ completely.

This is the author’s fourth warning he gives to God’s people about falling away and exhorts them to commit to a lifestyle of faithfulness.

Remember, God’s people during this time are essentially being baptized in persecution. By and large, the author is speaking, by and large, to a believing Jewish community.

But he was also writing to those who had heard the Gospel. They are fully aware of the Person of Jesus Christ, but were riding the fence on whether or not to make a full commitment of surrender to the Lordship of Christ because the persecution was so severe in those days.

So on the one hand you had believers in Christ who’s faith was shaken due to the pressure of persecution and loss of all things for the sake of Christ.

On the other hand, you had those who made no commitment of surrender yet because to embrace Christ is to embrace an inevitable suffering that would come with following after the Lord of Hosts.

So the writer to persevere because Christ is their pearl of great price and is so much better. And their momentary “affliction is working out for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” – 2 Corinthians 4:17

So persevere and don’t drift away from your anchor, that is Christ – your hope of glory! So form today, I would hope for us to see…

**2 different types of encouragement to persevere**

Let’s look at our first one, shall we…

**I. Consider the Warning for Continued Disobedience**

In other words, if you fail to persevere in your faith and fall away from the living God, understand the inevitable consequence of rejecting the fullest revelation you will ever come to know, that is Christ – your continued disobedience for your abject rejection results in:

* No atonement for you – no one to wipe away your sin
* No one to stand between you and a holy God
* No bridge of grace for you to cross over into the Celestial City because your sins have separated you from a holy God.
* No one to placate God’s wrath against your sin
* No cross to reconcile you before a holy God

Death is the wage you will receive for your sin, as Paul put it in Romans 8:23.

Some of you may have heard about a man named John Newton. Prior to his salvation, John Newton made a living getting rich by selling…slaves.

At one point during one of his voyages, he and his crew ran into a terrible storm that virtually tore the ship in pieces.

But that experience so terrified Newton that he came to recognize a far greater and terrifying certainty concerning the sovereign One who stood above the storm!

Here’s a quote from his Autobiography “*Out of the Depths”*

Please, God,” he prayed, “I know that I am a terrible sinner. No man has ever deserved Your mercy less than I do, but I beg You to help me!” Lungs burning, core muscles screaming, with nowhere else to turn, Newton prayed as fervently as he pumped. And he kept it up.

Then, in new slivers of calm between blasts of wind, Newton heard a sailor yell, “The storm! It’s passing!”  The rush of relief almost undid Newton. “Thank you, Father.”

Nine hours after the storm began, a shaft of late-morning sun streaked through still-angry clouds, and soon the wind gave up its assault. The men breathed easier, though they were still in danger.

Newton ordered every man to strip his bedding and use it to stop the leaks. Towels, pillows, blankets, and clothes were stuffed into the cracks and nailed down with boards to keep the battered ship afloat. They aimed the ship toward England.

With their firewood lost, men huddled together, so they wouldn’t freeze. There was little food left, and what fish they managed to catch by hand, they had to eat raw. Every day they grew colder and weaker. On the tenth day, a man died.

As his men lost hope for salvation, Newton wrestled with God over his own salvation. Many times in his life he had narrowly been saved from death. Each time, he had turned to God, but as soon as the danger was over, he dove back into his life of sin—always deeper than the time before. Why would God answer the prayer of a man like that?

Through long sleepless nights, Newton ransacked the pages of a borrowed Bible until he read the words: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” (Romans 3:23–24 ESV).

A gift! “If such grace is possible, save me one last time, Lord. And I will serve you till the day I die.”

Eighteen days later, the battered ship made it to the coast of Ireland. As soon as every man stood on shore, the wind picked up. The ship groaned one last protest, tilted severely, and sank.”

After the Lord did some housecleaning in the life of John Newton, he would write a good many hymns, one of which was titled, “Amazing Grace.”

He was keenly aware of his past life, but also keenly aware of the Lord’s grace so much so that he would say in that hymn “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I’m found, was blind, but now I see.”

That’s what redemption does. The writer to the Hebrews encourages God’s people not to neglect so great a salvation. To press on. To remember the certainty of God’s promises to them.

Because if you walk away from so great a revelation is to incur another promise – the certainty of God’s wrath.

I left something out about John Newton. John Newon was so sure of God’s salvation in his life saved a wretch like him, but he wrote a hymn that many in this room have neither sung or perhaps have not heard of…

The title of this hymn is called “*Day of Judgment. Day of Wonder”*

*“At his call the dead awaken,
rise to life from earth and sea;
all the pow'rs of nature, shaken
by his looks, prepare to flee.
Careless sinner,
what will then become of thee?”*

That is…

**A. The terrifying judgment of the Lord**

**Hebrews 10:26-27** “*For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.*”

**B. Comparison of more severe judgment**

**Hebrews 10:28-29** “*Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?*”

**C. Two truths about God from the song of Moses**

**Hebrews 10:30-31** *For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge His people.” It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

**Deuteronomy 32:35-36** - “*Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them.” For the Lord will vindicate His people, and will have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their strength is gone, and there is none remaining, bond or free.*

**1. Vengeance belongs to the Lord**

**Romans 12:19** - *Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.*

**2. The Lord judges - vindicating the innocent and punishing the guilty**

**II. Consider the Positive Motivation for Continued Obedience**

**A. Remember the suffering and obedience from the past that we go through together**

**Hebrews 10:32-33** - *But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.*

**B. Focus on the better and lasting inheritance**

**Hebrews 10:34-35** - *For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.*

**Philippians 3:8** - *More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ…*

**C. Endurance is pleasing to the Lord and results in a great reward**

**Hebrews 10:36-39** - *For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.*

**Habakkuk 2:3-4** - *For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay. Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.*

**James 1:12** - *Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

**Hebrews 6:9** - *But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.*