

Confident, Joyous, Resilient Faith

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[0 : 00] So, we've come together today again on the Lord's Day to think about our faith, confident, joyous, resilient faith. We're looking at Hebrews chapter 10.

But let me just give you a little context of where we are before we read our scripture passage. It'll be up here in just a few minutes. In the section we're looking at today, Hebrews 10, 19 to 25, the author, he's giving some words of exhortation to first century audience who had experienced some significant persecution.

You've heard of the Roman Emperor Nero. He was in power. He's someone who is infamous for his extravagant wickedness and his disdain for Christians.

He became the emperor at age 17 when his father died and he had his mother murdered because he saw her as competition for power. His reign of terror ended when he was 30 years old when he committed suicide, took his own life.

And followers of Christ had been physically assaulted, lost their homes and possessions, thrown into prison on account of their faith in Jesus. They'd been ridiculed in public. Many of them had been killed.

[1 : 14] And Hebrews is really an appeal for endurance in the face of hardship. Christians are being called to hold fast to their faith, to endure hardship based on what God has said in his word, reminding them of what God had said and what Jesus had done for us on the cross.

And so they were being encouraged to draw near to God, who had opened up this new and living way, this new access into his presence through the sacrifice of Christ.

And no longer bringing an animal sacrifice to the temple priest. So really a question for us today is, how does a follower of Jesus Christ deal with adversity?

How do we deal with suffering and trouble? How do we remain confident, full of joy and faith in the midst of trouble or suffering? Let's look at the text this morning.

Stand if you're able and we'll read from chapter 10, 19 to 25. And as we read, pay attention to these three exhortations in our text.

[2 : 25] Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us, through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near.

Draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold fast, hold fast, the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another, 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.

Amen. These are the words of the Lord for us. Amen. Let's pray and ask his blessing. Father, we ask you from these thoughts on this passage today, we pray that your Holy Spirit will build up our confidence in Christ, that you'll increase our joy and strengthen our faith in the good times and also in times when we're facing trouble and adversity.

And we pray also for strength and safety, Father, for those who are still in harm's way from the effects of Hurricane Helene, flooding and cleanup and rebuilding of communities and of lives, lost people who have lost loved ones, several dozen people who have lost their lives in this hurricane and its effects.

[4 : 21] Father, we pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in churches who will be ministering with the cleanup. We pray for your blessing on them and just for your comfort of the gospel in those places.

And we give you thanks in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. You can be seated. So, you know, it's not a good thing to be known in the church as somebody who is always stirring it up. Right? Stirring things up. Stirring people up. But in the context here of Hebrews chapter 10, it is something that's good.

Something that we all should be known for. We should have a reputation for stirring one another up to love and good deeds. You know, it's likely that someone here is experiencing some degree of anxiety or fear or trouble in your spirit over some present circumstance.

Something going on in your life or the lives of loved ones that's causing you trouble in your spirit. And if not today, probably later this week, something will come up that will try to rob you of your confidence and your joy in knowing that God is always working for your good.

[5 : 44] You don't have to be facing severe persecution like those first century Christians to wander away from the gospel. You just have to be human. The comfort and confidence that we have of the good news of the gospel, it needs continual replenishing in our hearts and our minds because it leaks out.

You know, they say as soon as you get up in the morning and you go throughout the day, as soon as you lay your head back down to go to sleep, the gospel leaks out and you need this replenishing. You need to be reminded. You know, we as American Christians, we certainly don't want to compare our level of adversity or suffering to what these brothers and sisters in the first century were going through.

But we do want to draw on the same comfort and the same strength. We want to draw on the strength that the writer of Hebrews is calling for them to draw on.

Raymond Brown, he says that no believer can cope with adversity unless Christ fills his or her horizons, sharpens his or her priorities, and dominates his or her experience.

[6 : 59] So, we need to see everything through the Jesus lens. We need to put the Jesus lens on every day and every part of the horizon that we look at, every priority, every experience.

We need to apply the gospel to it, what Christ has done. I wonder if the writer of Hebrews, if he were addressing us today as American Christians, you know, if he would tell us that most of our adversity is really self-imposed.

You know, that rather than government-sanctioned persecution or adversity like these early Christians, ours may be more internal than external.

And what I mean by that is that we first, we face internal adversity within ourselves when we're tempted to fall in line with the culture around us.

We're tempted to fall in line, for example, with the radical individualism of our culture. That's what underlies a lot of the tension in our culture, is this sense that I'm my own boss, you know, my rights and not my responsibility.

[8 : 11] We're tempted to give in to the belief that our individual rights are more important than our responsibility to God and to others. You know, our individual happiness, my prosperity, my identity, who I choose to be or, you know, who I say I am is more important than the well-being of the whole.

And Paul Tripp, he speaks of this as this internal war between the kingdom of God and his concerns and the kingdom of self and self-concerns. So there's this war always going on inside of us between God's concerns and self-concerns.

We need the same encouragement that these early Christians needed. You know, we need the Lord Jesus and his concerns to fill our horizon. We need him to be the one who's constantly sharpening our priorities in everyday living.

We need Jesus to dominate our daily experience. Instead of being drawn away from Jesus and the gospel by persecution, the writer of Hebrews, he's exhorting his readers with these three things.

He says, in the face of trouble, he's saying, draw near to God, hold fast to the hope of the gospel, and encourage one another with love and good, toward love and good works.

[9 : 39] You know, but before he gives these, these practical three-point exhortation, makes for a great three-point sermon, because it's right there in the text. The writer, he spends a lot of time on the why.

What's the motivation for drawing near to God? What's the motivation for holding fast to the hope of the gospel and encouraging one another toward love and good works?

He spends 75%, the first 75% of his letter, reminding them of the superiority of Christ. He's just stressing, Jesus is better, the superiority of Christ, over and over again.

You know, you may have had a speech class in high school or college, that dreaded speech class, where you had to get up and give a talk, right?

Maybe you were, you advanced in speech so much that you even got on the debate team, and you traveled and debated other schools, and you learned principles of debate in argumentation.

[10:48] You learned how to debate an opponent by repeating a main idea from a variety of angles to drive home the point that you're trying to make. And that's what the writer of Hebrews is doing, really, in the first 10 chapters.

He's building an argument with theological truths and illustrations, and the main point he's driving at is simply this, Jesus Christ is better.

Jesus is superior. So don't be drawn away in your faith in him by anything lesser. Jesus is better. And sometime over this week, I'd encourage you to take time to read the whole 13 chapters of Hebrews.

Do it in one sitting if you can. And I know it'll be an encouragement to you. You'll end up worshiping and adoring Christ for who he is and what he's done.

Maybe you want to read it with that wonderful song playing in the background, Christian Stanfield song, What He's Done. You know, familiar with that song? See on the hill of Calvary, my Savior bled for me.

[11:59] My Jesus set me free. And look at the wounds that give me life. Grace flowing from his side. No greater sacrifice.

I wish I could sing it. You know, if I were to try to sing the chorus, would you help me? Would you help a non-singer? Goes, What he's done, what he's done, all the glory and the honor to the Son. My sins are forgiven. My future is heaven. I praise God for what he's done.

You know, what he's done, that's really the message of Hebrews. That's it right there. He's reminding them over and over again of what Jesus has done.

You'll see Jesus' superiority compared and emphasized from more than 25 different angles. Jesus, he makes the case, Jesus is better than the angelic beings.

[13:05] He's better than the Mosaic law. He's better than the priesthood under the old way of access to God. He's better than the created world. He argues that the natural world will wear out like a garment, like a piece of clothing, but Jesus will last forever.

You will change, but he's forever the same. You know, your years will come to an end, but his years have no end. Your body and your mind are going, right?

Some of us may be more evident than others. My mind is going, but his body and mind are perfect forever. And thankfully one day we will have a body like his that won't wear out.

The world is filled with all sorts of unrest. There's disasters, there's wars, social and racial unrest, all kinds of division. But Jesus' rest is better.

He argues about this Sabbath rest is much better. And the writer of Hebrews says we are to work hard, we are to strive to enter that rest.

[14:13] Jesus' rest is better. The priests under the old covenant, they were good, but Jesus is better. They were prevented in continuing their office, he says, because at some point they died, right?

Their bodies wore out. But Jesus is our priest forever. He always lives to make intercession for us so that we may find grace and mercy in our time of need.

The priests had to be of good character, but Jesus' character is better. Hebrews reminds us that the priests, they had to offer sacrifice for their own sins.

They had to be careful. But Jesus has no need to ask for forgiveness for sin. Chapter 7, 26 to 28, he writes, for it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

He has no need like those high priests to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

[15:24] For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests. But the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a son who has been made perfect forever.

Our forever perfect high priest. He argues that Jesus' blood is better. His access to God's holy presence is better. Confidence in Christ's obedience is better than any confidence you can have in any ability you might muster to please God by keeping the law.

His perseverance in suffering is better than ours will ever be. His grace is better. His judgment is better. God's vengeance is better so that he says we are to leave it in his hands.

He says vengeance, reminds us, vengeance is mine. I will repay. The Lord will judge. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Chapter 10, 31.

Do you ever want to take vengeance? Do you ever want to just give somebody instant karma? Sure you do. Of course you do.

[16:35] But Jesus' way is better. He said leave that to me because it's a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Are you understanding his argument?

Are you seeing what he's doing here, the point that he's trying to make about what Jesus has done? He says Jesus' compassion is better. These early Christians were commended for their compassion in the face of persecution.

When they were thrown in prison for their faith, they just continued to serve while in prison. Chapter 10, 34, and 35, he said, for you had compassion on those in prison and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which is a great reward. You know, how can someone joyfully accept the plundering of their property?

Only if you know you have better property that can't be plundered. You know, when thieves broke into our house a few years ago over here on Ivy Street and plundered some of our property, stole all my wife's jewelry that I had purchased for her over many years, ran off with the TV and the computers and the electronics, basically turned the house upside down, even beat the dog, traumatized our poor dog.

[18:10] You know, in that instance, when I came home, I wasn't rejoicing in the plundering of my property. I wasn't very joyful, I can tell you.

I was pretty mad. More about the dog than about anything. But in that instance, you know, I wasn't suffering loss because of my faith in Christ as these early Christians were.

And it really was a teachable moment for us, for our family. In that, you know, possessions can be replaced. All of those possessions have been replaced.

Maybe not all the jewelry, but the TV and all that other stuff, you know. We have some much more valuable possessions in Christ that thieves can't get their hands on.

And the writer says that what we possess in Christ is better, much better than any material possession. Think about your most prized material possession that you have that gives you a lot of comfort and joy.

[19:16] Jesus is much better and the possessions you have in Christ are far greater than any joy we can get or any comfort from material possessions.

No persecution or adversity can take those possessions away from you. They're guaranteed because of Christ what he's done. The writer goes on and he makes the case that our reputation in Christ is better than any reputation that you can earn on your own.

Living by faith in Christ and his work is better than living by the works that we can do. Our heavenly home with Christ is better than our earthly home. You know, America is a great nation.

I'm glad to be living in America in this great country but there's a much better one. There is a much better country and Chattanooga is a beautiful city and everybody wants to come to Chattanooga and retire in Chattanooga.

It's a wonderful city to live in but the heavenly city is much better. Hebrews argues for the heavenly city and the heavenly home even New City Fellowship.

[20:28] We love New City Fellowship. This is a great church but New City was never intended to be the new city. It was to point to the new city.

The new city is much better than, you know, that new city is much better than this new city. Right? Jesus is the perfect pastor, the perfect elder, perfect shepherd, perfect deacon and Jesus is there and we long to be in that new city.

The writer says that faith in a creator of all things is better than faith in naturalism or in chance. The faith of God's people and the faith's benefits is better than unbelief and its consequences.

To those Christians who are suffering, he argues that suffering's reproach for Christ's sake is better than any reward you might receive by distancing yourself from him to try to protect yourself.

In chapter 11, 24 to 26, he says, By faith Moses, gives an illustration, one of the many illustrations. He says, By faith Moses, when he was grown up, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

[21 : 55] He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt for he was looking to the reward. Right?

Greater wealth. The reproach of Christ is part of the wealth that Moses clung to. You know, none of us likes to be disciplined when we do wrong.

You remember, as a child, you received discipline when you did something wrong. But the writer argues that even discipline is better in Christ than going our own way.

In chapter 12, 8 to 10, he says, If you were left without discipline in which all have participated, everybody's been disciplined, then you're illegitimate children and not sons.

Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

[22 : 51] For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them. But he disciplines us for our good that we may share in his holiness. So his discipline of us is something we should welcome because it's going to be a benefit forever and ever in eternity.

Right? We're being made more and more like Christ and his holiness because of the discipline, the wonderful discipline of God. His discipline is better.

It makes us like him. The writer of Hebrews makes a convincing argument that Jesus is better.

Right? What he's done is better.

And he exhorts us that we shouldn't give lip service to the lordship of our lives, Christ's lordship over our lives. We need to respond to that with action and intentionality that demonstrates that we really believe it, that we believe these truths in order to receive these blessings from God and to put them into practical use where the rubber meets the road in our lives.

He exhorts us that we must confidently draw near to God, draw near to him. We must hold fast to our hope in Christ.

[24 : 07] Hold fast to that hope. And we must do it in relationship with others. We are to stir one another up toward love and good deeds.

It's not just about you and Jesus. You know, you live in the Christian life with Jesus in your corner. It's about together, being brought together into a family, into a community where we pray for one another as we sang about.

Right? We love one another. We stir one another up toward love and good deeds. And we must draw near to God continually with sincere hearts, he says.

When we draw near to God in prayer or times of worship and praise, we're to come to him with a sincere heart, not just in some ritual or mechanical way.

You know, sometimes I fear that even my prayers over the meal, as we pray over every meal, can just become a ritual. That's an unthinking thing that, you know, we join hands and we say a prayer.

[25 : 14] Sometimes singing songs of praise and worship maybe can become mechanical as well. If we're not rejoicing in the gospel truths that underlie those lyrics, those words, and we're not thinking about them, it can just become mechanical, not out of a sincere heart.

He says, come with a sincere heart. You know, unfortunately, I think a lot of the Christian contemporary music industry is more industry than it is driven by the industry than by sincere worship in faith.

Thankfully, not all of it because we sing some of those songs and they really bless us, right? So, but some of it, you know, whenever you get a lot of money and fame involved in anything, it tends to mess things up, right?

It ruins people sometimes. We need to draw near with sincere hearts. What about participating in the Lord's Supper?

We fence the table or we guard the table whenever we have the Lord's Supper. And that's because there are warnings in Scripture that we are to examine ourselves. We are to come with understanding.

[26 : 27] We're to come with sincere hearts. It's always to be done in full assurance of faith in knowing what God has done. And that's why we say if you don't have faith in Christ, if you have not trusted in Him as your Savior, He's not come in and poured His grace into your life yet, then you

should wait.

You should let it go by and let that happen first so that you're doing this appropriately as the Scripture teaches us.

And when we draw near to God in prayer and praise or sitting under the preaching of the Word of God, because of our union with Christ, it's really Jesus who takes us into God's holy presence. Have you ever thought about that? We don't have to, really, we don't have to invite the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we say that, invite the Holy Spirit to come and be with us.

Holy Spirit is here because He's living inside of us, right? So, it's not as though we come by ourselves and the Holy Spirit may not come, you know, we're united to Christ.

[27 : 36] So, we're coming with Him when we come into the presence of God. He doesn't just politely open the door for us, you know, hold the door and say, you know, you can go into the presence of God.

No, it's like He grabs us and He says, come with me into the presence of God. Because of what I have done for you, come with me.

Our union with Christ, that should motivate us in our praying. It should motivate us in our service, in our evangelism, in our mission work, and in stirring one another up.

Because of our union with Christ, it's Christ in us, Christ through us, that's helping us to stir somebody else up toward love and good deeds.

Our union with Christ, we're drawn near to God with sincere hearts rather than just a mechanical way, mechanical words.

[28 : 40] We're to come with confidence or boldness rather than coming with anxiety or fear. You know, the type of fear that we are to experience because of our union with Christ is this reverential awe.

That's what it means to fear God, is that we come with awe of Him. There's this reverential trust in Him because we have been given access.

God has given access to sinners into the throne room of God through His Son, Jesus. And the reason the curtain was torn open when Jesus died, you know, that thick curtain that kept you out of the inner holy place in the temple.

The reason it was torn open was because Jesus' body was torn open. And through the tearing of His flesh, the curtain was torn.

And by faith, we died and rose again with Christ. Scripture argues that we have died with Him, we've been risen with Him. so now we come into this holy place, the presence of God with confidence, assurance of faith, bold and confident in Christ rather than tentative and fearful under the law.

[29 : 57] You remember even the priest, the old covenant, he had to be careful in how he entered into God's presence. And he was only allowed into that inner sanctuary, that holy of holies.

Once a year, He could come in. We, on the other hand, we can come at any time. 24-7, 365. We just go right into the presence, the holy place of God, bringing all of our faults and weaknesses where we find grace.

Because we go with Christ. Hebrews 4, 14-16, he writes, Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God.

Let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Confident Christians, bold Christians, to come into the presence of God because of Christ.

[31 : 12] We come with sincerity. We come with bold confidence and we also come with gratitude and joy. You know, the cross of Jesus Christ is the only appropriate place where we can experience greater joy by reflecting on great suffering.

We can see the beauty of the cross, even in the ugliness of the cross, and we're to stare at the cross. We're to fix our eyes on it.

We're to reflect on the horror and the suffering of perfection crucified. And the goal of that, the goal of gazing at the cross is to produce greater gratitude and joy in us that the suffering was endured in your place, that you should have been on the cross suffering because of your sin.

But someone else was your substitute. Someone is your substitute. And the priest forever, he continues his work of intercession for you in your weakness.

You know, I grew up in a church. I grew up in the Baptist church and we sang all hymns. There was no Christian contemporary music when I was a kid growing up, but I'm familiar with a lot of those great hymns because of that growing up, singing those hymns Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night.

[32 : 39] We always sing and we went to church faithfully three times a week. This hymn, Near the Cross, you familiar with it? Written in 1889. It says, Jesus, keep me near the cross.

There a precious fountain, free to all a healing stream, flows from Calvary's mountain. Maybe I can sing the chorus and you can sing it with me if you know it.

How's it go? In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever, till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river.

Fanny Crosby wrote a lot of hymns that we are familiar with about the blood of Christ shed for you on that horrible cross.

You know, she's writing about finding our glory in the weakness and death of the cross. Keep me near the cross. He's saying, keep me near the cross every day.

[33 : 55] And the writer of Hebrews, he wants you to reflect on that incredible confidence and freedom that you now enjoy in access to God because of the cross, through the cross.

He wants you to remember the way it was before the cross when the Israelites in Exodus 19, you remember they were told to fear for their lives if they came near the presence of God on Mount Sinai.

God gave them instructions through Moses that no one was to even touch the mountain. Not even the animals. They were to keep the animals away, keep their distance from God.

And that's the same God. It's the same God that we worship today. And we need to be in awe of that, that God is holy but because Jesus touched the mountain.

Because Jesus went to the mountain for us. We don't have fear of being stoned or being shot through as he told Moses. That even animals or any person that comes near will be stoned or they'll be shot.

[35 : 06] We don't have that fear. We come into his holy presence with confident, joyous, resilient faith. Knowing that we only belong there because of Christ.

Because of what Jesus has done. This new and living way that is such a blessing to us is because of what Christ has suffered for us.

You know, he starts out in verse 19. The very first word we read this morning in the text was therefore. And so he's pointing us back to all of this argument of these theological truths that he has been reminding them of.

Therefore, this is what, how you apply this. Based on all these truths about Christ's superiority, you're to draw near. You're to hold fast. You're to do it together with others.

Stirring one another up to love and good deeds. And then he adds, as the King James puts it, as I grew up hearing this verse, not forsaking the assembling together of yourselves.

[36 : 16] Not neglecting to meet together as some are in the habit of doing. But giving up, giving up on their gatherings for worship in the face of hardship.

So there was, there was a danger of these early Christians. You know, giving up on their practice of gathering together for worship. Because it was hard. Right? They, they, they were being persecuted.

We don't have that excuse. But we come up with other excuses. Maybe, and it's not always an excuse why we can't be here. We're, we're blessed as a church to have live streaming.

Right? So people watch us online. But if you're, if you're watching online, I should say to you, if you're staying home by yourself just because it's comfortable or because it's easier, that's not a good thing.

How can you stir one another up if that's the way you, you worship? If you're able to be in fellowship, to be present in, in the body, we need to be here.

[37 : 18] We don't need to neglect that. So let's be on the guard against this radical individualism that is part of our culture because of all that Christ has done.

Hebrews is calling us to be together in an accountable fellowship. And we believe this can practically be applied to church membership as well. You should have your name on a roll, you

know, somewhere where elders and members know you and make promises to you and you to them.

We have this Discover New City weekend twice a year where we invite people to come on a Friday night and Saturday morning just for an opportunity to hear more about the church and to have an opportunity to give their testimony to elders and to officially become a member of New City Fellowship.

That's important. We believe that. And one of our larger churches in Chattanooga sadly does not practice church membership at all. I understand. They don't keep a database, a record of who the leaders are committed to as members.

So you can kind of drop in for a while and then drop back out and no one will be obligated to follow up with you. I believe the writer of Hebrews would say that's a significant error.

[38 : 41] The churches should have membership, should, there should be accountability, should care about people enough to be involved in their lives.

We should know one another. We should not just be a part of the large gathering but where we have accountability to elders. But in a smaller fellowship, in a Bible study or in a small group, we need to worship regularly together here as a body on Sunday morning.

But we need to participate in these small gatherings as well. So I think the writer of Hebrews would encourage you, join a small group or get involved in a men's Bible study that meets for breakfast or a women's group or some type of group.

Sunday morning we have prayer here at 9 o'clock. We have a monthly prayer meeting. We have a Wednesday noontime prayer time online that you can zoom in.

Some way for you to pray and to encourage and to stir others up toward love and good deeds. God has given us wide open access through what Christ has done.

[39 : 54] And Jesus invites us to come with him, to go with him into the presence of God. So may God's Holy Spirit build up your confidence in Christ.

May he increase your joy and strengthen your faith in the good times and not just in the good times but especially in those difficult times of adversity or trouble when you're facing our temptation is to forget the good news of the gospel so often.

But let's reflect on how the lengths that God has gone to in Christ to open up the way to presence to his presence.

And let's hold fast. Let's hold fast as a church to our hope and let's continue to stir one another up toward love and good deeds. Amen? Amen.

Let's pray. Father, we bless you and we thank you for your word. Thank you for Hebrews and this writer of Hebrews that we're not even sure of his name.

[41 : 00] We don't know who wrote the book but we know because of all of these theological truths that it belongs in the canon that it's one of your inspired works and we thank you for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in giving this writer this argument to remind us of all that has been done for us in Christ.

Help us to practically put it to use in service to you and in service to one another. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.