

HOW NOW SHALL WE LIVE PT. II

Hebrews 10:26-39

We have launched back into our study through the book of Hebrews. At the point of the letter now in which the Writer is seeking to give more practicals on how to live out our faith in light of the glorious supremacy of Christ the Son of God.

Last week we saw that we live with confidence, courage, and in community.

This week we will hear a clear warning and a clear reminder of the hope that we have.

The warning we will get today is one of the most intense ones in all of the NT. It is clear, unequivocal, and really gets at the heart of sin and unbelief, and why it is so much worse than simply not following the rules. Be warned, there will be some discussion about sin, death, hell, and the anti-christ that might make some feel uneasy or uncomfortable. That's kind of the point. But I will try not to be a jerk as we discuss God's Word and let God speak for Himself.

We don't shy away from difficult or hard topics, for God puts them here for a reason, and often that reason is to shake us out of our patterns and habits and get us to turn back to Him to receive grace and mercy to help us in times of need.

Story about how both Azure and Malakai have had time where they just run and don't stop running, to the point of running into the street. Had to yell really intensely to get their attention to stop before they got hit by a car and died.

Azure didn't stop, but another dad heard me and grabbed him before he ran into the street.

Malakai stopped but then immediately ran back to me crying and wouldn't let go of me.

I tried yelling stop, but it didn't work, instead I yelled their names and that got their attention.

Example of Azure is the example of people God sends in our lives to save us and pull us back out of the flames of hell.

Example of Malakai is the example of the desired goal for the warning, which is to bring us back close to Christ and not let go.

Warnings are a means of grace in the life of the believer for they help to keep us close to Christ at times when we might be starting to run away from Him and into danger.

Hebrews 10:26-39

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has 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 trampled underfoot 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 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 the 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, 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 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 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 and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD:

THANKS BE TO GOD!

Covenant Apostasy

The Writer is increasing the intensity of the warning as the passage reaches its climax in vs. 31. Thus, we see an increasing intensity of our own possible drifting away from the faith and truth of the Son of God. It doesn't always happen right away, but more often a casual and slow drifting that might seem imperceptible at first, but eventually gains momentum until we find that we are gone for good.

I'm going to be a bit provocative today because our text is very provocative, meaning, its intention is to provoke a response to the gospel call and gospel application in all areas of life. So, if you are thinking Gee, Ryan doesn't usually preach like this, what has gotten

into him? You are not alone. This is intended to provoke a response to Christ and His lordship in our lives.

Disassociation

The first sin that is in view is the sin of neglecting the gatherings as Christians. To begin to disassociate yourself from the church. For the first century Christians, to disassociate yourself from the church was a clear sign that you were never a Christian to begin with. As I spoke about last week, I believe that this pandemic has exposed for many where their true allegiance and hope in their life is. There are so many, not just in our church, but in many churches across our city and state that have taken this as an opportunity to walk away from Christ. If you are not regularly worshipping with the saints in a local church, I would have to question your salvation. The two go hand in hand and cannot be separated from each other.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. – 1 John 2:19

God uses circumstances and situations in our lives to test our faith. This is not a new topic in the Bible, but is one that is spoken of often. Abraham was tested, Job was tested, the first century church was tested...the word for testing is the word for revealing. God puts things into our lives to reveal where our true loyalties and loves lie. It is not unkind, but a gracious work of God to draw us to Him and to strengthen our faith and increase and enflame our love.

Our heavenly Father sends us frequent troubles to try our faith. If our faith be worth anything, it will stand the test. Gilt is afraid of fire, but gold is not: the paste gem dreads to be touched by the diamonds but the true jewel fears not the test. It is a poor faith which can only trust God when friends are true, the body full of health, and the business profitable; but that is true faith which holds by the Lord's faithfulness when friends are gone, when the body is sick, when spirits are depressed, and the light of our Father's countenance is hidden. A faith which can say, in the direst trouble, Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him, is heaven-born faith. – Charles Spurgeon

What else is the deliberate sinning that is in view?

It is not just our regular battle with our sinful flesh, but to turn to any other form of worship, salvation, or love which is not rooted and found in the person of the Son of God, for whom He was sent into the world to redeem His people by His blood shed in the New Covenant, and whose life is given to us to live out here and now in the world.

Worship: Our culture is telling about all kinds of alternative things to worship: worship the self, worship the government, worship pleasure, worship money, worship power, etc.

Salvation: Our culture is giving all kinds of alternative ways of finding salvation and hope. Science is our salvation, government is our salvation, education is our salvation (but only education governed by the state and its curriculum approved by a secular age).

Love: Our culture is teaching and forming for us a way to view the ultimate purpose for human identities is sex, specifically our sexual desires and/or postures. Our sexual identities now become, in today's culture, the primary center of definition for what makes me a me. I am told to embrace all of that as good, even if it is harmful to me in the long run, or causes harm and relational strife in my closest relationships. Loving ourselves over and above our communities is the primary posture of our culture today.

Denial

The next stage of this apostasy is a denial of the truth. To deny the truth of the gospel and its saving power. This can come in different forms:

To add to the gospel requirements of salvation. Believing that we need to do something along with faith in Christ for salvation.

Example of the Jews making the Gentiles live according to the Law of Moses and for the men to get circumcised.

To believe that the gospel is just a myth or a made up story that doesn't really save and is for the weak minded. To rationalize away our sin and the need for salvation.

To deny that there is a God and that Jesus is not God.

To deny the historical teachings of the apostles. This is also what is in view in this denial of the truth.

You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone...

– Ephesians 2:19

Peter is the best example of one who denied even knowing Jesus, much less being a part of His inner circle...lots of ways that we are tempted to deny Christ in our lives and to accept the pressures to conform by our culture, and accept the pictures of what human thriving looks like.

Our culture today really views that human thriving is centered around the self. Our own individualistic expressions of who I believe myself to be is king and the modern dogma.

Defacing

Perhaps the most intense section in this warning is how the Writer exposes the truth of what sin really is by describing it as having trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? – **Hebrews 10:29**

This is extremely stark and personal. It is not just not following the rules, but it is throwing Jesus down and stopping on His face over and over again! It is called that which is Holy and sacred and beautiful, ugly, defiled, and putrid. It is making a mockery of the Creator, obedient Son of God, faithful friend, champion of the elect, High King of the saints, and merciful High Priest over the church! This is intensely personal, and demands an intensely personal response from God the Holy Judge.

Darkness and physical torment

The worthless servant (will be) cast into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. – Matthew 25:30

Eternal fire

Depart from me you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his messengers. – Matthew 25:41

It is better... (not) to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire...in hell, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. – Mark 9:43, 46

Unending punishment

These will go away into eternal punishment. – Matthew 25:46

when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might... – 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

The warning that the Bible is giving is urgent, it is cutting, it is scary. The great American theological and preacher Johnathan Edwards writes his most famous sermon based on this very text. One of the most influential sermons in the early history of America. Based around 10 themes on the nature of God's relationship now to those who are not yet His by faith:

There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God.

1. God may cast wicked men into hell at any given moment.
2. The wicked deserve to be cast into hell. Divine justice does not prevent God from destroying the wicked at any moment.
3. The wicked, at this moment, suffer under God's condemnation to Hell.
4. The wicked, on earth – at this very moment – suffer a sample of the torments of hell. The wicked must not think, simply because they are not physically in Hell, that God (in whose hand the wicked now reside) is not – at this very moment – as angry with them as He is with those miserable creatures He is now tormenting in hell, and who – at this very moment – do feel and bear the fierceness of His wrath.
5. At any moment God shall permit him, Satan stands ready to fall upon the wicked and seize them as his own.
6. If it were not for God's restraints, there are, in the souls of wicked men, hellish principles reigning which, presently, would kindle and flame out into hellfire.
7. Simply because there are not visible means of death before them at any given moment, the wicked should not feel secure.
8. Simply because it is natural to care for oneself or to think that others may care for them, men should not think themselves safe from God's wrath.
9. All that wicked men may do to save themselves from Hell's pains shall afford them nothing if they continue to reject Christ.
10. God has never promised to save us from Hell, except for those contained in Christ through the covenant of Grace.

*Hell is a spiritual and material furnace of fire where its victims are eternally tortured in their minds and in their bodies by God, the devils, and damned humans, including themselves. Their memories and consciences as well as their raging, unsatisfied lusts torture them. In hell, the place of death, God's saving grace, mercy, and pity are gone forever, never for a moment to return. God will be the hell of one and the heaven of the other as a consuming fire. Scripture justifies the doctrine that hell remembers this world. Especially they will remember how they were warned, will remember their sins, thinking hell was a dream, will see the glory of God and the redeemed and that sight of the blessedness of heaven will increase the hellishness of hell. Hell is not the absence of God but his presence - his inescapable, wrathful presence. Impenitent sinners will see God face to face forever. That is their hell. – **Jonathan Edwards***

Appeal: Therefore let everyone that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come.

Pause for a breather. That was kind of intense, and for good reason. But we seriously need a palate cleanser, and I don't really know how to do a smooth transition from such an intense topic, so I'll resort to sharing a couple of joke that Azure has been telling us non-stop for like two months.

Which country would fish live in if they lived on land? Finland

What is white and flies over the sea? A seagull. What is white and flies over the bay?
A bagel.

Covenant Renewal

Just like what we experienced with focusing on this topic of the judgement awaiting those who reject God's Christ, the Writer seeks to now have a transition to encourage the church that he has great confidence that they will not fall prey to the deceivers and false teachers that were around. He does this by reminding them of the fruit of their faith and to exhort them to stand firm and not shrink back from declaring the gospel, from being the people of God in the midst of a culture which did not like them, and to hold fast to the confidence we have in the hope of eternal life that Christ has secured for us.

Reminders

The pastor in the Writer senses that this topic and warning may cause some or many in the church to despair, to become afraid, or even doubtful of their own salvation. So, in order to calm their fears and to encourage the faint-hearted, he seeks to remind them of how they have admirably demonstrated their own commitment to the gospel and to then church. He reminds them of their good fruit which proves their calling and election to Christ, and of the glorious future of eternal life that awaits them after death.

What are some of the good fruits that the Writer is recalling for them in order to help them remember that they are Christ's?

They experienced struggle against sin. They experienced struggle against those who were opposed to the gospel and the church.

They were publicly harassed.

They identified with those who were put in prison for their faith.

They joyfully accepted the seizing of their property and the sacrifices they were making for the sake of the gospel.

Why are these considered good fruit?

The external showed the faith of the internal. Their love for Christ and His church was far stronger than their love for this present world. Their hope in the glorious future inheritance was more real than their worldly possessions. Their faith in the freedom that the gospel brings was stronger than the chains that they had in prison.

Thus, for us, the external fruits we see in our lives are often indicators of where our true faith hope and love are put.

What is the exhortation that the Writer gives to the church?

We need to endure.

We need to stoke the strength of the confidence we have in Christ and His promises.

How do we do that?

Through continuing in fellowship with one another.

The spirit of the anti-christ and the man of lawlessness is deception. This is one of the primary signs of the last hour, the increasing deception in the nations which would lead people away from the truth and away from the church. We are experiencing this a lot now, and it will only get worse.

Being together is one of the primary means by which we can remind one another of the truth and hold fast to it in confidence.

Through saturating ourselves with the truth, God's word is truth.

Through putting on the full armor of God.

Through resting in the completed work of Christ and letting His grace permeate every area of our lives.

What is the promise that God has give to those who endure to the end?

Our souls will be preserved! We will receive the glorious inheritance of the saints.

According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is

inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls. – 1 Peter 1:3-9

Reformers vs. 39

The last exhortation that is given is the exhortation to not shrink back from the opposition of those who would come against the truth of the gospel and the church. It is the idea that the Writer has been expounding since the beginning of the letter: do not shrink back in the face of hardship or opposition, but press forward and advance the gospel!

This is the call for today's Christians too! We must not shrink back from the increasing opposition to the clear declaration of the gospel, nor shrink back from the gathering of the saints, nor shrink back from the prophetic voice speaking into our culture about those things which the culture believes, teaches, celebrates, and legislates which run contrary to the gospel, and to the law of God! I believe that too many Christians in America have believed the lie of secular neutrality, which is the predominant view now in our culture.

The idea that secularism is neutral, and thus we can build institutions and governments based on this neutral, non-biased position. And this is a lie!! Secularism started as an attempt to scour away any vestige of God, or of the Bible, or of biblical principles in the public spheres. It was an attempt, a very successful attempt I might add, to relegate the notion or religion to the private sphere, and so long as it doesn't enter into the public space it is acceptable. But here's the deal, secularism has a theology, it has an anthropology, it has a teleology, and it has taken over our culture and is not content to just let us play in our own little sandboxes, but wants to take over our sandboxes and kick us out! Secularism's theology, anthropology, and teleology are all antithetical to the Biblical standards for human thriving and must be opposed at every turn! We must not shrink back from it, but boldly declare the gospel and prophetically speak into the culture to repent and turn back to the living God!

Secular Theology: There is no God, but the individual self is god

Secular Anthropology: We define ourselves however we want. My own happiness, my own view of what I want to be is king and lord. Humans are primary sexual beings and must be defined by our own individual understanding of our personal sexuality, whatever that is. You do not get to tell me that what I am feeling or desiring is not good, or even wrong. That is hate and needs to be stopped and condemned.

Secular Teleology (finished product): Conformity to the populace. Controlled by the state, being raised to be good citizens.

It is a place where I can say I am a woman trapped in a man's body and nobody bats an eye at that. Where it is even celebrated and honored in our stories, our ads, our books, and our leadership.

It is a place where we fight tooth and nail for the right to murder our own children for the sake of autonomy, convenience, or safety all in the name of health care and offer them as bloody sacrifices to the gods of self. Where we condemn anyone who says murdering babies is wrong, and make them as outcasts and extremists to be shunned.

It is a place where we strip away the God given authority and responsibility of parents over their children's lives and instead give them to the State to be raised, indoctrinated, and inculcated to grow in the instruction and discipline of atheistic secular humanism.

It is a place where those greedy for gain are protected, raised up as heroes of humanity, and given places of honor in our public spheres.

It is a place where entertainment is our daily sacrament, the numbing of our minds so that we are slowly drained of our ability to think for ourselves and let the State do it for us.

As the Church, we must remember that just as the secularism of our culture today is not neutral, the gospel is not neutral either. God's Word has something to say about every facet of human life and relationship; a word that seeks to promote the best vision for human thriving!

We must be willing, not just to stand firm, but to actually live in such a way as to promote an alternative narrative to the dominant one we see and hear every day in our culture. We need now, more than ever, to steep ourselves in the Word of God, to take seriously the call and God given stewardship to raise our children in the instruction of the LORD, to take seriously the call of God to gather regularly to rightly worship Him, and not the state, to take seriously the call to prophetically declare that which we see in culture to be contrary to the ways of God, to live as a community which knows the best things for human thriving, which God has made known to us in the gospel and person of His Son Jesus Christ.

I want us to stand firm, to not shrink back, but to press forward and to engage with the culture. To call out evil, sin, and harmful philosophy's, laws, teachings, and ideas which will lead humanity further and further away from the truth of God.

Friends, I want you to seriously consider where your soul is at with Jesus Christ? Have you turned to Him to find salvation, secured hope and pardon for sin, and love which surpasses all understanding? If not why not. Come to Jesus today by faith and find that your soul will be preserved for life everlasting

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

– Hebrews 3:15

Church, I want you to consider your way of life. Are you standing firm in the gospel and in the biblical principles that are given to us for human thriving? Or are you finding yourself shrinking back in fear, doubt, or confusion. Come to Jesus today, find Him as the anchor

for your soul, the cornerstone upon which you can build all of your life around and in whom the best kind of life is found.