



**Hebrews 10:26-39**  
**The Better Way to Live Pt 2**

Summary: There's nowhere else to go if you walk away from Jesus, so remember your previous confidence, patiently endure the present, and look forward to the eternal promise.

We've had a lot of fun lately considering all the good news about what Jesus has done. There were weeks that I was just giddy about coming in here to preach. But now, we come to some heavy stuff. It's like someone at the party just stopped the music, flicked on the lights and said "Yo, the cops are here."

Last week I shared with you that even as a pastor I have gone through some seasons and events that challenged my faith, things that cause me to wonder, "Am I doing the right thing with my life? Is all this Jesus stuff real?"

I shared that because we read in:

**Heb 10:23** Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.

And so, I shared with you that there are times, and events, and people in your life that tempt you to let go of your faith. Life throws things at you, the devil and his demons throw things at you, the government, your boss, your school, your spouse, your parents, your coach, your teacher, they throw things at you and you have to decide: will you **hold fast the confession of your hope without wavering**, or not?

That's not always an easy or automatic choice. Temptation can be strong, the pressure real, the pain intense. So, Hebrews encourages us to hold on tightly to the faith and stay in Christian community where we find strength to resist, especially when we gather for worship.

We learned that when life is hard, when we are pinched and pressed by things that anger us, frustrate us, depress us, fill us with anxiety, or lure us to leave the path of following Christ and plunge into indulgence and temptation – when all of these things mount up against us, we fight back, hold on, and persevere through the resources God has given us.

The very next verse reads

**Hebrews 10:24** And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Christian, you have the Word of God in your hand guiding you, the Son of God before the throne to forgiving you, and the Spirit of God inside you and upon you to strengthen, comfort, and equip you and on top of all that, you have the church around you to encourage you, minister to you, and walk through life together. You've got a lot going for you, even when life throws hard things at you.

But, all of this brings us to a very sober warning. We're told to draw near to God, hold on to our faith, and gather with other Christians for worship and fellowship, *because* there is no other alternative for those seeking forgiveness from God and relationship with Him. Church, listen to me: if you walk away from Jesus, there's nowhere else to go.

Yes, we have learned that Jesus is a better priest, who offers a better sacrifice, in a better sanctuary, and establishes a better covenant, all of that is true, but here's the flip side:

**Heb 10:26** For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The concept of salvation is central to the Christian faith, but that means you need to be saved *from something* and saved *by someone*. That something is the righteous judgment of a holy God and Jesus is the Someone who saves you from it. But *if you turn your back on Him, where else are you going to go?*

That's the issue the author of Hebrews is addressing. Remember, he's writing to people who grew up with the old Jewish forms of worship, a tabernacle and later a Temple that revolved around rules, robes, and rituals. You had to live a certain way, keep certain rules, avoid certain things, and you had to bring sacrifices and offerings to God while men in robes tended the burning altar and kept going in and out of the Holy Place to tend to things in there. And then one guy, once a year, could actually go into the Most Holy Place and be in the presence of God.

The purpose of the whole system was to show us how hard it is to come to God on our own and how much we needed Him to come to us instead. Everyone, throughout history, has been saved the same way – by looking to God to provide the means for our salvation.

Righteous Jews came to the tabernacle with a sacrifice or offering looking *forward* to the day when God would provide a sacrifice for them. Today, we come with empty hands, looking *back* to what He did for us on the cross and receive blessings, spiritual gifts, and grace. We bring nothing to God but receive everything from Him.

The problem is, if you know that, you understand that, and then, for whatever reason you turn away from it, *where else are you going to go?*

You can't go make another sacrifice at the Temple. Remember, about 40 years after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, the Romans invaded Jerusalem, burned the Temple, and tore the whole place down brick by brick.

The only thing that remains today is the foundation which you can still see in Israel if you visit the Western or the Wailing Wall. But there is no altar, no priests, no Holy or Most Holy place – the whole system was wiped out.



So, again, where are you going to go? What are you going to do? How are you going to worship God if you don't draw near through Jesus, hold fast the confession of your faith, and press into the church? There is no other option.



God isn't like Chipotle. He's not asking, "What'll it be?" Do you want your salvation in the form of a bowl, tacos, a burrito? Do want barbacoa, or chicken? Black or pinto beans? Side of Guacamole? You don't get to customize your salvation experience. You don't get to choose what forms and flavors of spirituality and faith you want.

God doesn't offer you a menu of salvation and spiritual experience to suit your palate. If you wander away from Jesus, you wander away from salvation. I say that because that's what God says in Scripture.

But let me try saying something that may sound shocking at first in order to help us understand: Christianity is not primarily about sin. It's not primarily about salvation. It's not primarily about some moral code to live by, or even the cross and the resurrection. Those things are all secondary.

At it's core, the Christian faith is about relationship. Relationship between you and God. That's the goal. That's the problem God is trying to solve. Your sin, the choices you make to ignore or resist God, or follow your own path instead of His commands, all lead you away from God while He is making every effort to bring you back.

You have to, have to, understand this: the Christian faith is not primarily about some code of ethics or morality. It's not about what radio station you listen to, or how you vote. It's not about what you watch and don't watch or drink and don't drink, smoke and don't smoke, say and don't say.

Christianity is, at root, all about a relationship between you and the one true living, majestic, holy, righteous, pure, God of all justice and mercy. He has made a way for you to be in that relationship – and if you won't accept it, or insist on finding some other path for yourself, you're rejecting what He has done and counting the blood of Jesus as something

nice for others but not for you, and insulting the God who has done these things in the process.

Which is why the greatest sin you could ever commit is not breaking one of the Ten Commandments, or even breaking all of them for that matter, *the greatest sin you could ever commit* is one you can never be forgiven of – it's the sin of rejecting the offer of salvation that God makes to you through Jesus.

If you understand that offer and walk away from it, where are you going to go? There's nowhere *to* go.

The people of Israel were told how to worship God and what to bring for sacrifices and offerings, but they were also warned about those who had flagrant disregard for their sin:

**Numbers 15:30** 'But the person who does *anything* presumptuously, *whether he is native-born or a stranger*, that one brings reproach on the LORD, and he shall be cut off from among his people. 31 Because he has despised the word of the LORD, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his *guilt shall be upon him.*' "

If you were not willing to make a sacrifice the way God said it should be done, you had no right or ability to do it any other way – you were stuck in your sin and God *would not forgive*.

God has always been the one who dictates the terms of worship, salvation, and forgiveness.

And so, today, if you will not be saved by Jesus, according to Scripture,

**Acts 4:12** ... there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

No other name. No other way. No other sacrifice. God says anyone who wants to be saved can be saved, there is nothing that can keep you from salvation, but you must come through Jesus, there is no other way.

Now, I know that provokes all kinds of questions for some, and it's good for you to wrestle through those things, but here I am reading to you from Scripture and this is what it says.

Scripture also says, the Holy Spirit comes to men and women, comes to boys and girls and testifies to them of salvation – God gets your attention about spiritual things and points you to Jesus and if you receive that, surrender to it, and submit to it, if you confess your sins and your need for salvation, you can be saved, but if you reject it, resist it, stubbornly refuse it and question it's merit and truth, *there is no way for you to be saved*, you reject the call into relationship with God and there's no place else for you to go.

Jesus Himself said:

**Matt 12:31** "... every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

It won't be forgiven *because it can't be forgiven*. If you don't accept your need for salvation, how can you receive it? What do you want God to do, knock you down and drag you kicking and screaming into an eternal relationship with Him in heaven when you don't want to be there?

Peter says it this way in one of his letters speaking about those who understand the gospel and won't accept it:

**2 Peter 2:20** For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

You see, there is quite a bit of Scripture dealing with this subject and it's serious, serious, stuff. So, let me make something clear: these passages are not talking about backsliding, they're talking about back-turning. This is not just oops, I fell into some sin, it's intentional, volitional, rejection of the gospel.

It is not *sin* that keeps you from God, it's *persisting in sin* that keeps you from Him.

The great apostle Paul, after years of walking with and suffering for Jesus would say,

**1 Tim 1:15** This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

John, the beloved disciple of Jesus would write:

**1 John 1:8** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You will sin. Christian or non-Christian, you will sin. But will you also confess and repent? If so, **He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

If not, well, **31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. For, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.**

You are either in relationship with God or under His judgment, and the only way into relationship is through His Son, Jesus.

So, with all of this in mind, there is a call to action – a call to press into God during hard times instead of drifting away. Read with me:

**Hebrews 10:32** But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: 33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; 34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. 35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

Here is where we circle back to where we started this morning – the fact that there are challenging times in our lives, times when we question our faith in light of our circumstances. But notice something extraordinary – what are the Hebrews told to do at in moments like that? [Recall the former days in which ... you endured a great struggle with sufferings.](#)

In other words, when life is hard and you're tempted to walk away, remember the other times when it was hard and how God brought you through them, then look ahead with joy to the eternal promise you have in heaven. In other words, when life around you feels hard, look ahead, and look back.

Allow me to make a few observations here with you.

First, the warning and the encouragement, notice in vs 35 we're told, [do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward](#). It might go without saying, but I'll say it anyway, there will be seasons, events, and people, that will challenge your confidence in God. But don't cast your faith away. Christians need to be told this. I need to hear it, you need to hear it, people you care about will need to hear it. [Do not cast away your confidence](#) whether you're confronted with loss and pain, an opportunity for forbidden pleasure, or new information that's hard to reconcile. [Do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward](#).

Second, notice that you will need to actively [recall the former days](#) (vs 32). The grammar nerds among us can appreciate that this is in the present tense and imperative mood. I'm not much of a grammar nerd myself though, so let me break that down for you – it's imperative, which means it's something you need to do, and it's present tense, meaning you need to be doing it right now. One Greek scholar translated it as: "constantly be recalling" the former days.

In other words, when life is hard, don't forget what you've already been through. Keep those memories fresh and active because they give you confidence and faith in the present.

And that's important because third thing I want to point is: these people are going through something difficult, *again*. In other words, this temptation to drift away from God and from fellowship and from their confidence in the Christian faith is experienced by people who have already been through hard times once.

And to be honest, sometimes that doesn't feel fair. Does it? There can be a temptation to think, "Haven't I already been through this? Didn't I already pass that test? God why are you allowing this to happen too? Or this to happen again?" It's the return of the trial or temptation or the unrelenting or compounding nature of it that makes it so tempting to walk away. You think, "Not that again. I can't take it. I can't do it."

And yet, the Hebrews are told, [recall the former days](#).

Because, point number four – the struggle makes you stronger. When verse 32 says you [endured a great struggle with suffering](#) in the former days – the word [struggle](#) is *athlesis*, from which we get the English word athletics.

You are a Christian athlete. And athletes get stronger, faster, and develop their skill through realistic, strenuous training and facing challenging opponents. If your life feels like a struggle at times, that's because it is! The struggle is real, but it has the potential to make you stronger. The truth of the matter is, an easy life has ruined more people than trouble and trials ever did. So, resist. By God's grace and with His strength, resist! And grow stronger.

Fifth, notice the outward orientation these early Christians had, even in their pain. They [accepted loss](#) and they sympathized with others. In fact, one of the best ways to deal with pain or conquer temptation is to look out for others who are struggling and care about them. Pray for them to overcome their temptation, consider how you can relieve their pain, get your eyes off your own sorrows or doubts or questions and get them on someone else.

Number six, and finally, they were able to endure present pain with joy in light of what lay ahead. Look at vs 33: you... [joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven](#).

This experience of real, authentic, joy in the midst of terrible circumstances is not an isolated event. In the days after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the disciples were arrested for preaching the gospel in Jerusalem, they were dragged before the courts and beaten, and yet when they were released:

[Acts 5:41 ... they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.](#)

Later, Peter, one of those who went away rejoicing, would write to other Christians:

**1 Peter 4:12** Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

All the way back in the Old Testament book of Habbakuk we find this:

**Habbakuk 3:17** Though the fig tree may not blossom,  
Nor fruit be on the vines;  
Though the labor of the olive may fail,  
And the fields yield no food;  
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,  
And there be no herd in the stalls—  
18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,  
I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Time and time again we are shown that it is possible to experience joy, fellowship with others, and even the mercy, strength and presence of God in our trials, all the while looking ahead to what He has promised to those who trust Him.

Yes, 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But that is exactly what we have been saved from, so hold onto your faith, don't wander away from Jesus. Look with me at

**Heb 10:37** "For yet a little while,  
And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.  
38 Now the just shall live by faith;  
But if anyone draws back,  
My soul has no pleasure in him."

Faith is essential to the life of the righteous –faith in the fact that God is real, faith in the fact that He saves, faith in the fact that even though there are difficult days on this earth, we can prevail, persist, and believe to the saving of the soul, by His grace, with His strength, and in the company of the saints. Which is why, after saying all these things and warning us in all these ways, our author ends on this confident note:

39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Christian, life is hard, but God is good. Do not give up. Do not let go. Do not draw back. Press in, press on. Remember the past, look around for who you can help, and pray for endurance so that you will receive the promise and experience the total, complete, and eternal salvation of your soul.

Let's pray.



## Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

### Hebrews 10:26-39 The Better Way to Live Pt 2

Summary: There's nowhere else to go if you walk away from Jesus, so remember your previous confidence, patiently endure the present, and look forward to the eternal promise.

*Pastors note: If you are discussing this in a group setting remember some things in Scripture are very, very, hard to understand and reconcile and this is one of those passages. The concept of 'losing your salvation' can be a heated one for some people, often for deeply personal reasons or as a result of particular theological convictions. I encourage you to listen to the text, enjoy the conversation, and be diligent to **love** one another.*

- What kind of difficult experiences have you been through that made you question your faith or made it hard to hold on?
- According to Hebrews 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Do you ever think of God this way? What might we gain by being afraid of falling into God's hands? What do we lose by not having a proper fear of Him?
- What is the difference between back sliding and back turning?
- Why is there only one unpardonable sin?
  - Cross reference Mark 3:28-30 and Matthew 12:25
  - In The Message, Eugene Peterson paraphrases the idea in vs 29 with "what do you think will happen if you turn on God's Son, spit on the sacrifice that made you whole, and insult this most gracious Spirit?"
- How has difficulty and struggle helped you grown in your faith?
  - Cross reference Romans 5:3-5
  - How do you connect with the idea of the Christian life as an athletic struggle?
- In verse 38 we read a verse that shook the foundations of Western Culture. When a relatively unknown German monk read these words, it rattled his soul and Martin Luther launched the Protestant Reformation. What does it mean that "the just shall live by faith?"
  - Cross reference with Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11
  - Thinking ahead, can you see any connection between this text and what you know of the main subject in Hebrews 11?