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Sermon Notes

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The Eternal Reward of Persevering in Confidence

Hebrews 10:35-39

Six months after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the American Revolution was all but lost. A powerful British force had crushed the American colonials at New York City and put them to flight. The British and their Hessian allies had then occupied three colonies, effectively cutting the rebels in two. They had advanced within sight of Philadelphia. George Washington had lost ninety percent of his army and was driven across the Delaware River. Many soldiers had been lost to death, injury and capture. Many more had deserted. As the year 1776 came to a close, Washington stood to lose even more soldiers legally as their term of service ended on December 31. The morale of the army was at an all-time low.

But on Christmas night of 1776, as a howling nor'easter struck the region, George Washington crossed the Delaware River and attacked the exhausted Hessian garrison at Trenton, killing or capturing nearly a thousand men. A second battle of Trenton followed within a few days, as the rejuvenated Americans held off a counterattack by Lord Cornwallis's best troops. Almost trapped at that point, Washington slipped away under cover of darkness, stole behind the enemy and struck them again, defeating a brigade at Princeton. The entire course of the war turned on these actions.

More than anything, George Washington had given his army what it could not fight without: CONFIDENCE in final victory! Without that confidence, an army will quickly surrender without a fight. But with CONFIDENCE, an army will overcome even appalling sufferings and deprivations.

Confidence is even more essential in the Christian life... absolute unshakable confidence that God loves us, has forgiven us, will protect us, will lead us, will reward us

Like soldiers, we face a terrible foe... Satan is opposed to us, as are wicked people who hate the gospel...

Without that confidence, we will quickly surrender to temptation and cave in... we will not run this Christian race with ENDURANCE

The author is writing to us to give us that confidence in Christ, in His promises

I. The Reward of Holding Our Confidence

Hebrews 10:35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

A. A Negative Command: Do Not Throw Away Your Confidence

1. Confidence = boldness, assurance...

a. Usually in the presence of God

Hebrews 4:16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

b. Inevitably flowing out into confidence before men... even before persecutors' PRIME EXAMPLE: Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, after healing the lame man at the Temple Gate

Acts 4:8-12 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone." ¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Paul spoke of the this BOLDNESS and CONFIDENCE in the face of persecution:

Philippians 1:28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved-- and that by God.

2. Context: Hebrews 10

a. 10:19-22 Boldness to approach God BASED ON THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST

Hebrews 10:19-22 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith

b. 10:32-34 Boldness when facing HUMAN PERSECUTORS

Hebrews 10:32-34 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. ³³ Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. ³⁴ You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.

3. Definition: Confidence = a sense of internal security or certainty based on the faithfulness of God and the work of Christ, resulting in bold actions (such as drawing near to God and standing boldly for Christ in a hostile world); it is a PEACE in the heart, and a sense of ASSURANCE that God will be faithful to you and to His promises

Hebrews 13:5-6 because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." ⁶ So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

B. What Does it Mean to “Throw Away” Confidence?

1. Actively: to dispense with it as a burdensome thing;
 - a. Greek word = to toss aside or lay aside
 - b. Example: blind Bartimaeus, calling to Jesus for mercy; Jesus calls him...

Mark 10:50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

Same Greek word...

- c. Later, the author will speak of laying aside sin and other hindrances
2. Passively: to allow the roots of confidence to wither gradually; drifting away from Christ; little by little losing the sense of absolute certainty that Christ is real, the reward is real, heaven is real...
3. Bottom line: we THROW ASIDE OUR CONFIDENCE either quickly or slowly by SINNING... it is an amazing thing, because our confidence = assurance is a PRECIOUS THING!! Amazingly valuable... to toss it aside as though it were nothing is INSANE
4. Practical illustration #1:
 - a. A person is walking in a strong assurance of Christ's love for him; he senses the pleasure of God through the Holy Spirit; He loves His life as a Christian; he is unafraid of Satan's assaults; he doesn't care what other people may do to him

- b. BUT Satan comes at him with deception, the flaming arrow of temptation flies toward him; instead of lifting his shield of faith, he allows the flaming temptation to take root in his heart; he weighs the options, and decides to sin; he drinks the intoxicating potion of sin
 - c. At that moment, he has chosen to THROW ASIDE his confidence; his assurance of salvation he considered of little worth; he traded it in for a moment of pleasure
 - d. Since he is a genuine Christian, he is still as justified after all that as he was before; BUT he is not as certain of it anymore; he has THROWN AWAY HIS CONFIDENCE
 - e. If he continues this same pattern of sin, his assurance will be entirely gone, thrown away like it was nothing
5. Practical illustration #2:
- a. A young woman lives in a Muslim country; five years ago, she had given her life to Christ as a result of a dream; she heard plainly an angel in her dream tell her to go to the city and there a woman would meet her and tell her a message by which all her sins would be forgiven; she obeyed the dream, and amazingly DID IN FACT meet a woman who spoke with her by name, though she had never met her before; that woman told her of Jesus' death on the cross for sins and of His resurrection; this young woman repented and believed; her heart was filled with an overwhelming joy and peace; it was as if she were floating in a sea of light, an ocean of happiness;
 - b. the woman gave her a bible and she began reading it every day; secretly, to keep it from her father and her brothers; her knowledge of the Scripture grew, and so did her assurance... she was CONFIDENT that God loved her in Jesus
 - c. that same month, her father found the bible; he was enraged and slapped her; he gave her a nosebleed; she answered boldly that Jesus was her Savior and He died for her and would never leave her or forsake her; her father yelled and her and threatened her, but she stood firm; her father was unwilling to give her over to an imam to be judged
 - d. day after day, this young woman lived under the constant opposition of a hostile family; the abuse increased; eventually she ran away and went to the city; there she found lay-paying work as a seamstress; her life was hard, and she often cried herself to sleep; her weariness often led to not reading the bible; she had no Christian fellowship
 - e. One day a handsome young man saw her at a coffee shop and began talking to her; he gave her a different kind heart wound than her father had; this

young man was a university student; he was funny, a Muslim, but not very serious about his religion; they began to see each other daily at the coffee shop; little by little her heart was growing hard... but she still claimed to be a Christian

- f. One day, she told this young man that she was a Christian; the man was surprised, but shrugged; he said "I don't care what you do in private; just don't embarrass me and we can be together"
- g. That night, as she lay in her bed, she felt the Holy Spirit warning her powerfully against this relationship; she was at a cross-roads; would she hold onto her confidence and stand boldly for Christ as she had done with her father, and face a continued life of trial but of inner peace; or would she throw away her confidence and embrace a life of compromise and ease?

C. The Rich Reward of Confidence

Hebrews 10:35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

- 1. The author uses an unusual word, combining "reward" with a verb form ("something bestowed"); then he INTENSIFIES it with the word "great"; our assurance in Christ will result in a GREAT and LAVISHLY BESTOWED reward
- 2. The matter of rewards in the Christian life can be confusing
- 3. We often associate REWARDS with MERIT... as though we have done something deserving
- 4. BUT the first mention of REWARD in the Bible is still the reward we should all be seeking

Genesis 15:1 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

- a. It is obvious that Abraham did NOTHING that would have merited this kind of reward!!
- b. God bestowed HIMSELF on Abraham as his very great reward; and no human being could ever merit this
- 5. In the same way here, the Author is pointing to the SAME REWARD: namely, heaven itself, in which we will come directly into the presence of Almighty God
- 6. Verse 34 speaks of this SAME REWARD:

Hebrews 10:34 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.

Psalm 16 explains it very well:

Psalm 16:11 you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

7. SO: the author is saying, THIS IS THE KIND OF LIFE THAT LEADS TO AN ETERNAL REWARD... a life characterized by ongoing faith and confidence in the rewards of God

8. He will return to this very same idea in the next chapter:

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

II. The Need for Perseverance

Hebrews 10:36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

A. Hebrews is the Book of Perseverance

1. It is not enough to BEGIN the life of faith; you must FINISH it as well; the prize does not go to the one who merely runs some of the race, but only to those who COMPLETE the entire course
2. There is a race marked out for us, and we must run this race with endurance

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

B. Simple and Direct Statement

1. "You have need of endurance"
2. It is required equipment... without it, you will not finally be saved
3. Consistent Teaching of the Bible: the surest mark of salvation is PERSEVERANCE IN THE FAITH

Luke 8:15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

Luke 21:19 By your endurance you will gain your lives.

Romans 2:7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.

4. We HAVE NEED of perseverance because the race is HARD and the race is LONG

C. Part of the Equipment the Spirit Gives... But It Is Ours to Develop this Virtue

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience

Revelation 1:9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

BUT... it is our responsibility to DEVELOP endurance

2 Peter 1:5-6 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance

This ENDURANCE is developed through trials and as God's gift through Scripture

D. How Endurance Develops

1. First, God gives it

Romans 15:5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement

2. Through trust in Scripture's promises

Romans 15:4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

3. Through God-ordained trials

- a. Trials the WE go through ourselves

Romans 5:3 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴ Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

- b. Trials that OTHERS go through and we can learn from their example

2 Corinthians 1:6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.

Philippians 1:14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

E. Endurance is so that We Can Serve God's Purpose in Our Generation

Hebrews 10:36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

1. God ordains your lives and your path of service; we live to do His will
2. He has ordained good works for you to do; only as you do those good works can your life count for eternity
3. Jesus had this attitude toward God

Hebrews 10:7 Then I said, 'Here I am-- it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.'

4. David "served God's purpose...", then he died; so must we

Acts 13:36 "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep

5. Sheep for the slaughter

Romans 8:36 As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

F. At the End of a Life of Endurance Comes the Promised Reward

1. Only those who live this kind of life receive the promised reward
2. The true Christian life is not a life of perfection in obedience, but it is a life of endurance in SEEKING to do God's will day after day, year after year

III. The Time is Very Short (vs. 37)

Hebrews 10:37 For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay.

A. The Author Quotes Habakkuk 2:3-4 in verses 37-38 (more in a moment)

1. God tells him the vision is coming quickly and will not delay

2. The Author to Hebrews picks up on this and rearranges the quotation from Habakkuk to make it more Christ-centered
3. It is not merely the VISION that is coming quickly and will not delay; it is “HE who is coming will come and will not delay”
4. This is CHRIST

B. Christ “Comes” to Relieve Us of Suffering

1. Christ “Comes” in three senses
 - a. In our lives... to shorten our trials to a bearable level
 - b. In our deaths... to rescue us from this world
 - c. In His own second coming... to end the entire era of suffering and bring in the perfect new world with no death, mourning, crying or pain
2. In our own individual trials... Christ measures out those trials and makes sure that they do not overwhelm us

Psalm 30:5 For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

[to the church in Smyrna] *Revelation 2:10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

Christ “comes” to the suffering Christian in the MIDDLE of the trial to assurance and comfort him or her. He literally appeared to Paul at some key moments to strengthen him:

[in Corinth] *Acts 18:9-10 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. ¹⁰ For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city."*

[at his final trial] *2 Timothy 4:16-18 At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

3. Our lives themselves are short... and Christ “comes” to end our suffering and rescue us

2 Corinthians 4:17 *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

Jesus stood to rescue Stephen and take him out of the world:

Acts 7:55-56 *But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

4. Time itself is short... Christ second coming will come SOON

Revelation 3:11 *I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*

Revelation 22:7 *"Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."*

Revelation 22:12 *"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."*

Revelation 22:20 *He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*

C. The Time is Extremely Short

Hebrews 10:37 *For in just a very little while*

1. The Author uses a very strong expression to give a sense of the brevity of our trials; he adds an extra adverb "micron" to give a sense of how BRIEF this period of time is in light of eternity
2. Yes, we need endurance, because the time is not NOW or IMMEDIATE... but it is an extremely short amount of time

IV. The Righteous Live by Faith... for the Rest of their Lives

Hebrews 10:38 *But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."*

A. Habakkuk 2:4 a Key Text in the Bible

1. Paul quotes it in Romans 1:17 (Martin Luther's salvation text!!) to teach how salvation comes to those who believe the gospel of Christ

Romans 1:16-17 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

2. Paul quotes it again in Galatians 3:11 to teach justification by faith apart from works

Galatians 3:11-12 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." ¹² But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them."

3. The Author to Hebrews quotes it here to speak of the kind of faith-filled lives that actually DO result in final salvation

B. Context of Habakkuk 2

1. Habakkuk grieved by the wickedness of Israel
2. God tells him He is going to bring the Chaldeans to wipe out the Jews
3. Habakkuk can scarcely breathe; states he is going to wait for God to give him an explanation
4. Habakkuk 2 is God's astonishing answer to Habakkuk in three major parts
 - a. First, individual people are saved from the terrible calamities of this life and wrath in the next by ONE WAY: FAITH
 - b. Second: human empires rise and fall, and wicked nations like the Babylonians will get their punishment from the next empire that rises
 - c. Third: God is building a kingdom that will last forever; all other human works are merely fuel for the fire

C. Celebration of Habakkuk 3: The same attitude the Author wants Hebrew Christians to have NOW in the midst of terrible suffering

Habakkuk 3:17-19 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. ¹⁹ The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.

D. The Faith that Justifies WILL CONTINUE through the WHOLE of life...

1. The faith that is genuinely from God is the only one by which sinners are justified in God's sight
2. Hebrews is telling us it must continue through all the phases of your life right to the very end
3. So... he WARNS the Hebrews one more time about the danger of apostasy

V. The Eternal Danger of Shrinking Back

Hebrews 10:38 But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."

A. Again and Again, the Author Has Warned Us of this Danger

B. One More Time... the Same Warning

C. To "Shrink Back" = "Drift away, turn away, fall away"

1. Same concept we've already seen in Hebrews 2:1, 3:13, and

Hebrews 2:1 ¶ We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

Hebrews 3:12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

Hebrews 6:6[It is impossible for people who have embraced the gospel] if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance

2. It is no different from what that wicked generation of Jews did who SHRANK BACK from entering the Promised Land because they DID NOT BELIEVE in God's power

D. If God has NO PLEASURE in Us, We Are Lost

If he shrinks back, I will NOT be pleased with him

1. This is a very serious statement: God has NO PLEASURE in the unbeliever who shrinks back from the suffering needed to run this race with endurance

2. If God has NO PLEASURE in someone, He will certainly not spend eternity with them!!

Romans 8:8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

3. It was because of PLEASURE that God elects and saves people

Ephesians 1:5 In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will

Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

1 Corinthians 1:21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

God takes NO DELIGHT in a cowardly person who will not persevere...

So, in order to make us pleasing to Him, He works ENDURANCE in us!!

VI. Final Salvation is Assured to those who Persevere (vs. 39)

Hebrews 10:39 ¶ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

A. The Author Ends with Words of Comfort... as He Often Does

B. Here Again He Makes it Clear: Shrinking Back = Eternal Condemnation

1. The word “destroyed” is very strong... God destroys those who shrink back
2. This is nothing less than eternal condemnation; this is how this same Greek word is used in other places

Matthew 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.

Romans 9:22 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-- prepared for destruction?

C. But WE Are NOT of those who shrink back!!!

1. By the grace of God, we are among those who will persevere to our final salvation
2. Again, notice the emphasis on FAITH: we are among those who BELIEVE and ARE SAVED
3. Literally: among those who “have faith for the preservation of their souls”
4. Salvation is an ongoing work on the soul... faith is essential to that work every moment of our lives
5. This is the only true path to heaven, dear friends
6. All other paths are counterfeit
 - a. Any path that rejects the need for perseverance in faith for ultimate salvation is false

- b. On the other hand, any path that implies that perseverance is OUR WORK ALONE apart from the work of the Holy Spirit is equally false

VII. Applications

A. John Piper Three-Part Summary

1. Hope: “So do not throw away your confidence...”
2. Obey: “persevere in doing the will of God”
3. Inherit: “you will inherit”

B. Cherish Your Assurance and Nurture It

1. Every willful sin you commit is a violation of your conscience... and you are in effect throwing away your confidence
2. Every temptation you resist and put to death is really a nourishing feast for your assurance
3. Every time you feed your soul on the promises of God, you are giving your confidence a fresh infusion of energy and strength
4. But when you leave off Bible reading and prayer, you are starving your soul and your confidence will wane

C. Think Often of the Rich Inheritance

1. Your confidence will be richly rewarded... with God Himself in heaven
2. Feed your faith by cherishing these promises... think often of these words

Revelation 22:3-4 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

3. Feed your heart on heaven... the glorious and beautiful place to which we are going

D. Fear Shrinking Back

1. The shrinking back the author has in mind here is APOSTASY from the gospel... but it usually creeps up on us in gradual steps... people do the BIG shrinking back because they did a lot of little shrinking backs along the way
2. We shrink back from fear of obedience... we think obedience will bring us pain

3. We are too afraid of other human beings... that's why we don't witness like we should
 4. We are too afraid of losing our possessions or security or pleasures in this world... that's why we seek security and comfort and ease
 5. We hear of mission opportunities or of outreaches or of ways to contribute money or of spiritual gift ministries that we can do... but we SHRINK BACK from full obedience
- E. Trust in Christ for Salvation!!!
1. Destruction is threatened to anyone who shrinks back from faith in Christ
 2. If you yearn to be among those who do not shrink back to destruction but who believe for salvation, COME NOW!!!